

## Somewhere to Heal

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# Somewhere to Heal

by [DearlyDevoid](#)

## Summary

“What’s going to happen to me now?” Tommy whispers quietly. He would rather spend eternity in that hellish limbo than go through being revived again. Being revived was worse than anything he’s been through since things first went to shit. He can’t imagine how much worse it would be a second time let alone again and again and again and-

“I’m going to send you somewhere else,” Kristen responds. “Somewhere you can heal and be happy.”

“Does a place like that even exist?” Tommy used to think that was possible. That he could find somewhere to heal from everything he’s been through where he could learn how to be happy again, but now that hope has been smothered to death and buried below bedrock. He’s tried over and over again to move on and heal and be happy, all he wants is to be happy, but the world has continued to fuck him over again and again and he’s lost hope.

“It does. In another universe.”

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//TLDR; After Tommy is killed by Dream for the fourth time Kristen decides she’s had enough of watching her youngest son suffer and sends him to another universe that just so happens to have superpowers.

Discontinued

## Notes

Trigger warnings: Major character death, suicide, gore, and torture?

Please let me know if I've forgotten any tw's. With that welcome to my first ever long fic on ao3!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

- Inspired by [Canon!Tommy in a vigilante AU what will he do??](#) by [Smallest](#)

# Chapter One

This can't be happening. He doesn't want to die, he can't die! Not yet! He still has too much to do! He needs to get Shroud somewhere safe. He needs to get Ranboo back. He needs to wait for Wilbur's apology. He needs to make up with Jack and Niki. He can't die yet!

He just has to keep running. He can't let Dream catch up. He needs to keep going, but even as he pushed himself to keep going it didn't seem like he had a choice. Already he was slowing down. Already Dream was gaining on him and he didn't know what to do. He had no potions or armor. At this point, the little food he had wouldn't even make a difference. There was nothing to do but run and hope he made it to safety. His breath tore through him in pants, his lungs screaming with the effort, his feet slapping the ground, sinking into the layer of snow with every step. He ignores the pain, ignores the exhaustion gripping his shoulders and dragging him closer to Dream's claws, and forces himself to just *keep moving*.

"Tommy," Dream calls stretching his name and sending shivers of fear down Tommy's spine. "Just stop running." No, no, no, no, no- "It's not like you have anywhere to go." Tommy blinks past the tears in his eyes and tries to block out the laughter echoing behind him. Just a little more! He's almost there! He won't get caught, he won't let it happen. He can't go through that again, not again, *never* again.

Mentally he scans his inventory for anything that could help. He had a netherite sword and tools and some food, but that's it. He can't fight, Dream would just kill him quicker, and food isn't much help at this point.

Something blunt slams into his side and he's thrown hard into a nearby tree. Snow rains from the branches covering him in a dusting of wet powder. His breath is knocked clean out of his lungs and he doesn't attempt to catch it before he's scrambling to get back to his feet. The plan goes out the window as the Axe of Peace swings his way and becomes lodged in his stomach, pinning him to the foot of the tree. The force of the hit knocks what little breath he had out of him and he slouches against the tree, bark scraping against his back, and bites down on his lip to hold in the scream threatening to tear him apart. The taste of iron coats his tongue from the newly split lip, but he ignores it.

Dream lifts the axe and nausea churns in what's left of his gut as he sees the blood spilling from the wound. Before he can think anything, not even a plea for life, the axe is back. It nestles deeper into his gut and tears into his organs and cleaves his bones into pieces. Dream pulled out the axe and swung again and again to the point where Tommy is sure his spine is visible and Dream can see the blood-stained snow below him through the hole in his abdomen. A splash potion is dropped on him, one of many the man had thrown, but it's barely enough to stop the bleeding. It healed him just enough to keep him alive, but not for long. It wasn't enough to save him. There was no saving him at this point. He was hovering at the edge of a half a heart as he had been for a while now, but with every potion Dream throws he's brought back from the brink of death only to fall back down again and again and again-

Blood bubbles from his lips and coughs wrack his body with the effort to breathe, sending blood splattering on Dream's mask. Dream only tilts his head and watches as Tommy heaves for breath. He was so close! He almost made it! If he stretched his neck just right Tommy could see his father's house. See the fence surrounding the wooden cottage nestled between mountains of snow. Instead, he's being pinned to a tree by an axe, staining the pure white snow red with blood.

His mind begs him to crawl away, to inch as close as possible to the safety of his father's wings, however destroyed they may be, but he didn't. It was like Dream said. There's no point in running. Dream would always catch him.

It's not like he'd make it if he tried.

"Isn't this better Tommy?" Dream's hand softly holds the side of his face and uses his thumb to wipe blood from his cheek. He leans his head away, but Dream's grip only tightens and jerks his face around so they're eye to eye once more. Tommy stares into the two dots on the mask of the man who's tortured him for years and all he can feel is fear. His usual shield of anger has fizzled to nothing under the threat of Limbo. Of being sent to the empty pit and yanked back whenever Dream felt like it. There is no escape and there never will be. Dream will always find him, dead or alive. He will spend the rest of his life and every moment afterwards running from someone who will always catch him. Who will always hurt him. Who will always beat him down until there is nothing left but the battered miserable husk of a person.

He will always be nothing but a plaything to a deranged man with the power of a god.

"Isn't this fun?" Dream tightens his grip on the axe that has yet to move from his stomach and slowly he twists. If he thought he was in pain before then this is *agony*. His already shredded organs were being sliced to pieces and his every nerve was alight with pain. How is he still alive? *Why* is he still alive? Healing potions aren't that strong! He should have died already! Was he so lost in the pain that he didn't realize Dream throwing more potions? Why isn't he dead?

He's not going to let him die.

The thought hits him like a truck and a new wave of panic washes over him. Dream's not going to let him die. He's going to draw it out. Every time he gets close Dream's going to hit him with another potion until he's begging for death. Begging for Dream to kill him. Tommy is nothing to Dream. Nothing but something fun to pass the time. Why cut off the fun early when he can make it last hours? Days? *Weeks*? He could do it, if he's got enough potions he could leave him like this for as long as he wants. Like hell, he's going to let Dream pull him around like a puppet on strings, not anymore. If he's going to be stuck being killed and revived over and over again, he'll get back at Dream in whatever ways he can. No matter how small or insignificant, he'll ruin Dream's fun every fucking time.

Tommy swallows the sobs he hadn't even realized he was making and took a painful, shaky breath. His limbs felt like lead even though Dream hadn't touched them and even the smallest

movement sent ripples of pain through his body. He chokes on another sob but doesn't let the sound pass his lips for more than a second. He ignores how Dream bristles in satisfaction at the sound, short as it was, and pushes through the pain. He knows what he has to do. Slowly, achingly slowly, his hands reach up and wrap around the handle of the axe just below the blade.

"Taking out the axe won't do anything Tommy," Dream taunts, voice sickeningly amused and smug. So primedamned *fucking* smug. Tommy could practically hear his smirk, practically see the condescending look Dream was no doubt throwing his way. "All it'll do is make you bleed out quicker. You're going to die either way." Normally the words would make him shake in fear, plead for someone to save him, but all it did was make Tommy angry. Prime, he wants to punch him. He wants to punch him so hard his mask would feel it, but he can't so he would just have to do something better.

Take away his fun.

Tommy grins, feral and unhinged, blood-stained teeth bared at the man, and speaks with a wet warble, voice dripping in a twisted sort of pride. "Fuck you." With that, he grips the axe as tight as he can and *pulls*. Tommy relishes in how fast the smugness leaves the other, replaced by a boiling wave of anger, even as the axe rips through what's left of his lungs and chest. Dream grabs the axe and tries to pull it away, but it was too late. His tired limbs tug the axe up and the sharp blade tears through his heart.

The determination ebbs out of Tommy's eyes and his arms fall limp beside him. The corrupted heart gained from his revival goes dim, muted red falling to black. Dream just stands from his place beside the corpse for a while before leaving, disappointment and anger clear to any who would see him. And so it stays, the corpse of a seventeen-year-old, hated by nearly everyone on the server, splayed out at the foot of a tree just a few yards from the house of his father. The father who would walk outside a few hours later with a steaming cup of tea to stretch his wings only to find the half-frozen mangled corpse of his youngest son, his child, his baby, long devoid of life. A corpse that would never again hold the soul of Tommy Innit.

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He couldn't remember the last time he felt truly warm. From the moment he was revived there was a constant chill that coated his every move. Even standing over lava deep in the nether did nothing to warm him up. He was sure that even if he jumped in and swam as deep as he could he still wouldn't feel warm even as his flesh burned and he was nothing but a charred skeleton falling to pieces in the lava. He didn't see any way he could feel warm again and yet, right now, he does. He feels warmer than he has since that Prime awful prison broke all that was left of him to break.

He snuggles further into the soft surface he's on, surrounded in safe and warm, chill pushed away by the *warmth*. It soaks into his bones and he finally feels like he isn't one wrong move from freezing to death. Melodic laughter reaches his ears and he doesn't need to think before the name settles in his mind. He shoots upright and comes face to face with someone achingly familiar, someone he's missed more and more with every day that goes by.

“Mom!” Tommy doesn’t hesitate to throw himself at her, arms wrapping tightly around her like she’ll disappear if he doesn’t squeeze with all his might, half laughing half sobbing into her shoulder.

“Hello, my dear.” The voice echoes around him holding a power only she knows and carefully she runs her fingers through his hair. The touch calms him and the tension he’s carried since the first war slowly ebbs out of his limbs leaving him boneless in her arms. He can’t help himself. It’s his *mother*. The only person who’s been by his side from the beginning no matter what. She’s *here*. He’s actually *with her*. “I’m so sorry, Tommy.” He smiles at the sound of his nickname, though it was more his actual name at this point with how much he hates his birth name and after a moment her words finally sink in.

He can’t help but stare in shock. “Sorry? But, why are you sorry?” Tommy wracked his mind, but couldn’t come up with a single reason why she would be sorry. She hasn’t done anything wrong, so why would she be sorry?

“I’m sorry you’re here,” she clarifies. “You’re not supposed to be here, not yet. You should have lived a long, happy life with your brothers and father by your side. You shouldn’t even have to think of the afterlife until decades from now. My precious boy, you’re only seventeen.” Her hands rested softly against his face, her eyes glistening with tears, each one glowing like a star plucked straight from the sky. He leans into the touch and looks into her eyes. He’s always loved her eyes. They were like looking into the void, but instead of feeling scared, he felt safe. Whenever he looked into the universe held in her eyes, specks like stars only make them glitter even in the weakest of light he knew everything would be okay. When he was younger people would tell him they could see the clear blue sky in his eyes. He’s sure he got it from her.

“You deserve so much better,” she breathes. He can’t put into words how much he wishes things were different, but he can’t change the past so instead, he has to suck it up and deal with it.

“Is this really the afterlife?” He whispers, pulling his eyes from hers to take in his surroundings. They were in the void. Specifically on a floating island in the void. Yellow dust decorated the ground and piled around the bottom of obsidian pillars that stretched into the sky. The two sat on the tallest of them.

In the center of the island was a broken circle of bedrock. He didn’t think it was possible to break bedrock and yet half-destroyed blocks of the material were laying in front of him as proof that it wasn’t as impossible as it seemed. He’s not too sure what it’s supposed to be but something in the back of his mind whispers the answer to him. He’s looking at a portal. The skeleton of a dragon curls around the broken circle and at the foot of the bedrock pillar the circle surrounds is a smashed egg, petrified with age. The place itself didn’t seem bad, but there was this feeling of wrongness that permeated the air. He didn’t need to be a god to sense the stale feeling of death around him.

“A part of it, yes,” Kristen answers, voice filling the dead space around them. “It isn’t where the souls of the dead reside, but it is considered part of the afterlife.” Her eyes turn sad and her voice wistful as she continues. “It wasn’t always that way.”

“Why is it now?”

Sadness creeps further into her eyes making the colors swirl and the glow dim. “This place used to be as lively as the Overworld. There were more enderman than the Overworld has flowers. Now only a few make it here from the Overworld. Chorus plants, shulkers, the dragon. There used to be so much *life*. Players would come here all the time, but when the people stopped coming the realm began to fade and with time it was lost entirely.”

“Why did people stop coming?”

“XD forbade it,” she responds, eyes solemnly looking at the remains of the mighty dragon. The words were bitter, but only slightly. A grievance long settled. “The dragon died and the egg fell from its stand killing off the last of this world's life. That is when this place was truly lost and its guardianship fell to me.”

“It seems lonely here,” Tommy mutters, leaning into his mother’s side.

“It is,” Kristen nods sadly. Her arm wraps around his shoulder, pulling him closer to her side, a testament to her loneliness. “The living can not last here for long.”

“But Da- Phil said he visits you. How can he visit if the living can’t stay here?”

“Phil is different. He isn’t just any mortal anymore, he’s my Angel. He is mine the same as this place is and at the same time so much more. He is a part of my world so it can not hurt him. Even if he is alive,” she tells him, chuckling slightly. Her words drip with love and care for her husband even as she stares with sad, swirling eyes into the decrepit world around them. As she stares into the void and everything beyond. For a moment he wonders if there’s more out there, beyond what his eyes can see.

“What is this place called?” He watches as an enderman teleports in with a ‘vwoop’ and wanders around with a block in its grasp. It doesn’t take long for it to teleport away again, back to where it came from, but the block was left at the base of a pillar, the only green in a sea of yellow and gray.

“The End.” The words echo around them, filled with power that weighs down on his mind. A name that hasn’t been spoken in ages, decades upon decades of time leaving the place forgotten in the memories of the living. Silence wraps around Tommy like a blanket and he allows it to press him closer to his mother, basking in the comfort her presence gives him. How could he not feel safe when he is with his mother? Tommy stays silent, fearful that a single word will snap the atmosphere like a twig, and allows himself to relax. They sit calmly for a long while. Just a dead child and the goddess of death in a forgotten realm. Just a boy and his mother.

“What’s going to happen to me now?” Tommy whispers quietly. The world does not shatter at his words. They only seem to bring more comfort, the world wrapping itself tighter around him, pressing him deeper into the calm and quiet the world seems to drown in. If he’s not in limbo does that mean he won’t get revived? As much as he misses Tubbo and Shroud and



Quackity and every other person dear to him, even if he isn't dear to them, he can't go through that again. He would rather spend eternity in that hellish limbo than go through being revived again. Being revived was worse than any other thing he's ever experienced and that's saying something. He can't even imagine how much worse it would be a second time let alone again and again and again and-

"I'm going to send you somewhere else." Kristen's voice joins the world and wraps around him, bringing him back to the calm from where he'd started to drift away into his fear. "Somewhere you can heal and be happy."

"Does a place like that even exist?" Tommy used to think that was possible. That he could find somewhere to heal from everything he's been through where he could learn how to be happy again, but now that hope has been smothered to death and buried below bedrock. He's tried over and over again to move on and heal and be happy, all he wants is to be happy, but the world has continued to fuck him over again and again and he's lost hope.

"It does. In another universe." He snaps his head to face her, disbelief written across his face.

"Another universe?" The words don't feel real even as he speaks them. He scanned her face, searching for some sign of a lie, but found nothing. She smiles down at him softly with fond eyes, her expression screaming of the truth in her words. "How is that even possible?"

"Normally, it wouldn't be," she answers, arms pulling him back into her side. "You know, you've left quite the impression on the gods. Not only the son of Death but the best friend of Chaos. Drista has become quite fond of you and XD has always been to type to spoil those he cares about. You are important to Drista so you are important to him."

"But another *universe*? Are there other versions of everyone? Is there another version of me?" His mind races, struggling to wrap itself around the concept. Another universe. A completely different world where he could start over. It *had* to be too good to be true. Nothing was ever that easy for him.

"There will be other versions of the people you knew here, but there won't be a duplicate of you."

"Why not? What happened to him?"

"He died." Kristen smiles sadly, bringing her arms down as if she's cradling a baby, and not a second later one appears. The baby was see-through and looked almost identical to how Tommy imagined he looked at that age. "This world's Tommy died as a baby." Remorse fills her voice and softly she caresses the baby's hair, hugging him to her chest. "There is only one of me and since I'm tied to this universe he had different parents than you. His parents loved him with all their hearts even as they died with him in their arms. Even so, I can't help but love him as my own. He's not my son, but at the same time he is."

He couldn't imagine what that must be like. To see alternate versions of the people you care about growing and living with strangers, never to know who you are. He knows that in her position he would feel the same. Prime knows he wouldn't love Shroud any less no matter

what universe he was from.

“How is this going to work?” he asks, getting the conversation back on track.

“I will send you to the world he came from,” she responds, the baby fading from her arms with the sound of her voice. “The world I am sending you to is very different from the Smp and it will take you some time to learn how it works but I'm sure you can get the hang of it. You've always been very resourceful.” He puffs up his chest in pride as Kristen smiles at him. “While you are there I will try to help you in whatever ways I can, but I won't be able to do much for a while.”

“I'll be fine Mom,” he assures her, wrapping his arms around her. This time, Kristen is the one clinging to him, almost fearful as she thought of the pain he's been forced to endure during his short life. He doesn't mind and only melts further into her shoulder. Suddenly his heart sinks and he remembers why he can't leave the Smp behind.

“What about Shroud?” The words seemed to drain the calm from the air, but he had to ask. How could he not? Shroud is his son; he can't just leave him, not after finding him abandoned all those months ago. He can't just leave without knowing a hundred percent sure that he would be alright.

“I swear to you, Tommy. He will be safe. I'll make sure of it,” she promises, power weighing heavy in the air as the oath settles deep into his bones. “I'm sure Tubbo won't mind taking care of him and Michael will be happy to have a friend.” Could he really do that to Tubbo? He's barely keeping it together after losing Ranboo, how can he shove his kid onto him like that? “If Tubbo can't handle it I'll bring him to Eret or whoever you trust more to take care of him. I promise he'll be okay, Tommy.”

He hesitates before nodding, “Yeah, that's fine. Eret's fine.” He may have hated Eret after he betrayed L'Manburg, but he's done so much to make up for it and he knows Eret will keep him safe. The monarch has always had a soft spot for kids. They'd take in Shroud in a heartbeat. “Thanks, Mom.” She only places a kiss on his forehead, slowly rubbing her hand up and down his arm in a comforting motion.

“Is there a Shroud in this new world?” The words were hesitant and he was almost scared to ask. Would Shroud be better off without him in this world? Or would he be in just as bad of a position? Would he be worse off because he wasn't there to help him?

She doesn't respond right away. She seems to be thinking about her answer and with each second that passes the dread of the answer grows. “There is, but he's not the same as he is here.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“He is only a spider.”

“Oh.” That wasn't what he expected, but as long as Shroud is safe and happy that's good enough for him.

“I can make sure you find him. It won't be right away, but I can lead him to you,” Kristen offers. Tommy only hesitates for a second before nodding. It won't be the same, but like his mother and the versions of him, Shroud is and always will be his son. No matter the universe, he will *always* be someone Tommy cares about with his entire being. “I have one more gift for you.”

“Ooh~ gimme gimme gimme!” Tommy beams making grabby hands at his mother, her laughing at his reaction.

“It's a surprise,” she teases and he groans, head falling onto her shoulder, pouting. She only laughs, rolling her eyes at his antics. “You'll find it when you get there.” Tommy nods and rubs his hands. It felt like they were falling asleep with a tingling feeling that wrapped around his fingers and slowly crawled up his arm. He looks at his hands in confusion only for panic to fill his mind. Green strings slithered up his arms, getting tighter and tighter the farther they traveled. This wasn't supposed to happen! She promised!

“Shh, everything's going to be alright,” Kristen carefully pulled him into her arms, holding him tight, but all he could focus on was the strings crawling up his arms, more and more joining the first to wrap around him. A hand settled on his shoulder, finally drawing his eyes from his hands to the people in front of him. Drista floats a few inches in front of him, hand gripping tight, but not enough to hurt, keeping his attention off the strings.

There's another a little farther behind, who he assumes is XD, that slowly floats forward. His hand joined Drista's on his shoulder and Tommy wanted nothing more than to beg for help but his mouth wouldn't open. He should feel safe, with the arms of his mother around him and the hand of gods on each of his shoulders, but he can't. *Dream's bringing him back*. He wasn't supposed to go back!

XD's detached head bobs in the air above where his neck would be and his mask stares at him blankly, dual pairs of white wings lazily swaying behind him. His hand begins to grow warm and Drista's and his mother's are soon to follow.

His vision begins to fade and the strings sink under his skin, constricting his bones, searing warmth chasing them deeper. Purple races through the strings, painting them a new color, making his fear slowly ease away, the painful burn becoming comfortable warmth. His mother speaks, words echoing in his ears as the purple glow overtakes him and his vision finally fades.

“Be safe my son.”

# Chapter Two

## Chapter Summary

Tommy arrives in his new universe and does some research and exploration. A calm chapter with absolutely no law-breaking.

## Chapter Notes

Welcome to chapter two of Somewhere to Heal! I'm aiming for 4k words per chapter, but this one somehow ended up at 9k so you get an extra long chapter for today! Enjoy!

Tw's:

Blood, mild gore, murder, and violence

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

He wakes up slowly, something he's not used to having grown up in a time where waking up quickly was a necessity, and finds himself on an unfamiliar couch. His sluggish mind is slow to work as he sits up and looks around the dark room. His memories swirl just out of reach, but he's content to wait for them to come to him if only for a moment.

Everything seems to come back to him at once and he begins to inspect the room with curiosity rather than apprehension. It was nothing like he's ever seen before. There was a large screen standing on a table with a smaller rectangle with dozens of small colorful buttons below it that reminded him vaguely of a comm. There were strange objects littered around the room and on the walls and everything seemed futuristic in a way. His mother was right when she said this world was different from the Smp.

He could tell he didn't change much from the trip across universes. The only difference he could see was his shirt was cleaner than he ever remembers it being. Not a single rip or bloodstain in sight. As he notices this he realizes it was the same when he was with his mother. She must have had something to do with it. As usual, his black long-sleeve shirt was under his usual red and white t-shirt, but the seams weren't frayed and decaying like before. Even the tear from getting his pickaxe stuck while mining was gone. The black shirt was originally just meant to cover scars, but after the prison it was also to help him stay warm, not that it did much. Now that the chill of dying and being revived is gone it'll go back to being there purely to hide scars. He relishes in the chill being gone as he finally stands from the couch and begins to examine the room more intensely.

First things first, he needs to make sure he's safe. He combs through the room, looking under every table and behind every chair before moving on to the next room. He locks every window and checks behind every door. In every closet and behind every curtain which he closes right after. It took half an hour before he was satisfied with his search and felt safe enough to relax in the new environment.

He sinks into the couch cushions and just sits. He sighs, allowing his eyes to fall shut in his contentment, and basks in the feeling of safety. He's *safe*. After all those years of running and hiding and fighting he's finally safe. No fear of Dream waiting around the corner with an axe or the sound of explosives hissing as they prepared to take away his home and belongings. No fearing for his life at every tedious moment between sudden dangers. Safe.

He takes in a deep breath and lets the air fill his lung to the brim before allowing it out in a slow and long and freeing exhale. His eyes flutter open and he finally moves to begin his new life. When he was checking the room Tommy noticed a note on the table in front of the couch but didn't read it. Now that he's sure he's safe he reaches out and closes his hand on the paper. A figure held the note down and Tommy took a moment to smile at it. It was a woman in flowing green robes and blonde hair. Her face was covered by a mask and a white crown floated above her head like a halo. Two sets of white wings were spread wide with her arms mirroring the pose as if lording over a land full of adoring subjects. He sets the depiction of his friend to the side, fully intending to put it on display by the giant comm screen thing. With nothing holding down the paper he finally begins to read.

*Dear Tommy,*

*I didn't want you to have to start again from nothing in a world you know nothing about so Drista and I got you some of the essentials. The apartment should have everything you need to get yourself started. Drista told me to tell you that she's going to visit at some point, but that she won't be able to for a while. As soon as she recovers from the power drain. She's excited for the both of you to cause chaos in a new dimension together. She'll be very disappointed if fire isn't involved in some way. Her words, not mine. I'm not sure if you've tested it yet or not, but all the world mechanics from the Smp should still be active here. Things like your inventory and health bar. You have your comm as well, but I don't think you'll be able to reach anyone other than Drista and myself. Your surprise is in your inventory along with what you had on you when you died. Stay safe darling and know that I will always love you.*

~Mother

P.S. - The square thing under the note is called a laptop. Use it to learn as much as you can. Don't jump into things without thinking like you always do, don't try to deny it. - Drista

He laughs at the note, just as excited about causing chaos as Drista, and sets the note to the side. With a wave of his hand a semi-transparent screen appears in front of him with miniatures of its contents in the squares. His food was neatly stacked in the corner and all his weapons were laid out in the row above his hot bar. Fuck yeah! His eyes scan the small partial stack of steaks and the singular apple and with a tap on the box the apple falls from the void into his hand. His hunger bar was starting to get a bit low.

He sinks his teeth into the fruit and holds it in his mouth as he continues to look over the screen. He brings up a hand to tear off the bite, but freezes at the sight of the objects nestled

into the far right corner of his inventory. He's quick to rip away the bite and send the apple back to his inventory barely chewing the fruit before swallowing it.

His hands shook as he carefully pulled each item from the void and set them one by one on the short table, pushing off the couch to kneel in front of it. There were six items total; an allium with a nametag, a compass, a picture, a package, and two discs. His discs. The real ones. He may not have a way to listen to them, but the fact that they were here and in his hands was enough to make his eyes burn with tears. The tears drip slowly down his face and he buries his face in his hands. Not only does he have his discs but he has a little piece of every person he cares about most sitting right in front of him. The bright lights in his horrible past and a hopeful future ahead of him. For once, he thinks this is an okay time to cry and so he does. He lets out every tear he has left to cry, but it was different than before. This is something *good* and crying for something like this doesn't make him feel nearly as bad as crying over anything else does.

It feels freeing. With every tear that falls he leaves another piece of his past behind and a seed of hope takes its place. He has something to look forward to, something to work towards and he doesn't have to worry about his past hanging over him and holding him back anymore. He's finally free.

With tear-stained cheeks Tommy takes in each of his gifts. His discs, the ones he sacrificed life and limb for. The compass Ghostbur gave him that now spun in endless circles without Tubbo to lead him to. The allium Ranboo gifted to him the first time they met. The picture he took with Shroud in front of his dirt hut. Five of his most prized possessions. Each a reminder of someone important to him.

"Thank you," he whispers, words spoken like a prayer to the gods who gave him a second chance at life. With more care than most thought he possessed Tommy sets each item back into their places tucked carefully in the corner he took them from.

With his treasures safe he turns to the final object. It wasn't anything he remembered seeing before. A simple box wrapped in brown paper and held together with twine. He pulls the loose edge and the twine unfurls from its bow and falls into a heap on the ground. He rips open the top and finds a bunch of paper.

"The fuck?" He pulls out each item and spreads them out on the table. A small bundle of colored paper wrapped in leather labeled 'wallet', a piece of paper with the words 'Birth Certificate' and his full name on it, a paper about laws, and a note. He didn't recognize the handwriting. The letters were too rigid to be his mother's handwriting and Drista's was an odd mix between chicken scratch and elegant loops.

*The others forget to give you money so here's some to get you started. Get a job, try not to steal, and if you do, don't get caught. That goes for any laws you break. Make sure you know all of them. There are a lot more here than you're used to. I won't bother telling you not to break them since you'll do it anyway, but if you get arrested I'll have to listen to Drista whining about it so don't. As long as you don't get caught you'll be fine. -XD*

While unexpected, the letter was a welcome one. He sends a mental thank you to the god and receives what he equates to an acknowledgment in return. He sends the wallet to his

inventory and pushes the other papers to the side for the time being. Time to figure out what a laptop is and how it's supposed to help him.

He spends the next few minutes trying to figure out how the laptop worked, but only managed to get increasingly annoyed. Grumbling to himself he turned it every way possible, but still couldn't figure it out. As he turns it once more, ready to throw the damn thing, his finger slips and the top lifts. Grinning at the breakthrough he giddily pries his fingers into the gap and pulls the halves apart revealing six uneven rows of buttons with odd symbols and a screen on the connected half. The screen lights up and he almost drops it in shock, fumbling to catch it before it falls and breaks.

"Fuck!" He clutches the laptop close and exhales in relief before carefully setting it on the table. Better to be safe than sorry and keep it on a stable surface. He looked over the symbols trying to place what they were supposed to be and realized they reminded him of letters. They weren't anything like the letters of enchanting tables, all curved edges and flowing lines instead of the, mostly, rigid shapes and dots, but he couldn't think of anything else they could be.

Cautiously he presses one and the same symbol pops up in a small bar on the top of the screen next to a flickering line. It's like a comm! A large, flatter oddly rectangular comm, but it's close enough.

To his surprise he found the longer he looked at the letters the more sense they made. With newfound confidence he types a greeting into the bar and clicks enter, the assumed equivalent of send, and instead of a single answer he receives an entire page of responses.

He pushes aside his fascination at the sight and clicks the top response. So many people answered him and so quickly too! "Ar-ti-cleh? The fuck is that?" His brows furrowed as he scanned the words on the page, meanings slowly filling his mind as he continued to read. It was informative, like the bulletin Wilbur built near the Camarvan to spread news, and was about a guy named Siren who is, apparently, a hero. Hero, as in, paid by the government to fight people. This world just keeps getting weirder and weirder. Not to mention that he could control people *with his voice*. This guy has legitimate *superpowers*! Bullshit! There's no way this is true, right?

From there Tommy falls into the rabbit hole of research, slowly getting the hang of the contraption until he was seamlessly switching from article to broadcast to amateur footage.

"This is fucking sick!" He moves ever closer to his screen, eye burning slightly with how little he's been blinking, as he reads an article about a vigilante named Time Keeper. He likes the idea of vigilantes. A lot of them seem more useful than some of the heroes he was reading about. That and most aren't afraid to get their hands dirty and break a few rules. Other than the obvious fighting crime without a license which is stupid as fuck. Why should people have to get a license to *fight crime*? It's stupid! Not to mention you have to go to something called school to get it which he learned is like a prison for children. Nope! Not fucking happening! If he wants to fight people he's going to do it primedamnit! What are they going to do about it? Cry? Nothing, that's what!

“I wonder if I have a power?” Tommy blinks his eyes a few times to get rid of the burning feeling and takes a bite out of his apple. He leans his head back against the cushions as he chews and he stares at the ceiling, pondering. “Probably not.” He shrugs. While it would be really fucking cool he doesn’t see why he would.

He returns to his reading and the passage of time falls from his awareness. The sun sets as he consumes article after article. The sun rises, but still his eyes do not leave the screen of his laptop.

Mobs don’t show up in the dark, a good thing considering the only light in the apartment is from the laptop, but there are still mob hybrids. The Hero Captain saved a child from a burning building. Las Nevadas continues to grow in power and spread its influence. L’Manburg is *still here*. He’s *living* in L’Manburg, not a crater in sight. President Schlatt pushes for hero applicants. Fucking Schlatt. Of course he’s here that asshole. Building blown up by villains. Vigilante Red arrested in Kinoko. Hero breaks skull in fight. There’s so much to learn! He doesn’t know how long he sat there in front of the strange device with the knowledge of generations, but the sun had begun to set once more when he finally pulled away.

He stands and stretches, back cracking as his arms raised above his head. If he spends another minute sitting down he’s going to implode, he needs to do something. He’s starting to get restless. Might as well put his research into practice and do some exploring.

By the time he left his apartment with his laptop, wallet, and keys, which he found on a hook by the door, in his inventory the sun was completely set.

He was still uneasy being outside at night, especially without armor and a weapon in hand prepared to fend off a creeper or skeleton at any moment, and kept having to remind himself that they weren’t a problem anymore. Occasionally he’d see a shadow hop from roof to roof and he assumed they were vigilantes or villains traversing in the dark, the perfect time for illegal activities. There’s the *slight* chance they’re heroes, but it wasn’t likely. From what he’s read, despite the high crime rates in his new home of Lower L’Manburg, heroes don’t stop by very often.

It doesn’t take a genius to see he’s in one of the poorer districts. The building’s were falling apart and he’s pretty sure there’s moss growing in his bathroom, but he didn’t mind all that much, it made sense. It would be suspicious for him to pop out of nowhere in the middle of a wealthy district, but someone randomly showing up in one of the shadier places wasn’t much of a head turner. He might as well be invisible.

He wanders for a while, no clear destination in mind, getting a lay of the land and taking in the sights. This may be L’Manburg, but holy Prime was it different. There were barely any trees and he’s seen a couple photo’s of heroes wearing armor in the borders, granted there were a lot of people wearing armor during the wars so that hasn’t really changed. People didn’t use redstone, instead using ‘electricity’. It made lights more compact and simple from what he’s seen. No single person spending hours or even days fiddling around with complicated components and tedious redstone dust just to make a light that turns on and off. Things don’t turn into blocks then you break them, there is an unfortunate hole in his wall from that test, and they aren’t a measuring system for distance. There are no crafting tables to



speed along building or casually mining in your free time. Tools like the ones he had were only used if strictly needed for someone's job and were heavily restricted. Even then swords and armor were unheard of for anyone except heroes and the rare villain or vigilante. Those were few and far between with most preferring guns which were insanely op crossbows that shoot metal shit instead of arrows.

This new world was a mystery to Tommy and he couldn't wait to find out everything. He forgot how much he enjoyed exploring new places and learning new things. It's a shame he never got to do much of it between all the fighting and wars. He didn't have to worry about creepers blowing up anything he tries to make anymore. He has 'villains' for that now. Or people coming at him with a sword over some personal vendetta he didn't know they had. Now he's got bored murderers with guns instead. On second thought things might not be as different as he thought. Doesn't matter, he's still excited.

Something slam's into Tommy's shoulder and he stumbles backwards. "Watch where you're going asshole," the man growls.

"You hit me dumbass," Tommy snaps and dusts off his clothes. He takes another step, ready to leave the interaction in the past, but the man had other ideas

"The fuck did you say?" The man shoves Tommy back and Tommy stumbles backward. The man steps in front of the entrance to the alley effectively trapping Tommy. There wasn't anyone around to see what happened with most people having rightingfully gone inside when the sun began to set which meant Tommy was alone in this fight. Not that it matters. Tommy knows how to protect himself.

The man stalks forward, tailored suit making him seem more important than he probably is. "Do you know who I am!" Yup, definitely a superiority complex. Bet he's some random underling or something who's close enough to the boss to think he's hot shit. Wrong!

"You don't remember? That sucks man. Sorry I can't do anything to help," Tommy mocks. The man seethes, glaring at Tommy like he could set him on fire with his eyes alone, which for all Tommy knew might have been able to do. Meanwhile Tommy just laughed. Not that's something he's going to remember for the rest of his life. Oh gods his face! Fucking hilarious!

It was funny until he was laughing too hard to notice the man throw a punch. It lands, hitting him right in the stomach, and he's thrown into the brick wall beside him, rolling to the ground to avoid the second. The man lunges, foot aiming to stomp Tommy's head, but he rolls to his back and kicks his feet into the man's gut.

The man is thrown across the alley and slams into the brick on the other side, blood dripping down the side of his head from the impact. Tommy scrambles to his feet, shoulder aching from the first hit, and the other stands, glaring, and draws a knife from his belt.

"You're going to regret that you brat." He swings wildly, but the teen ducks, easily avoiding the knife, and tackles him around the waist. Both are sent to the ground in a tangle of limbs and Tommy pulls his hand back for a punch only for the man to get the leverage to shove him

off. Tommy is tossed to the side and rolls out of the way as the knife comes down where his head was a moment earlier.

“This is so not what I wanted to do today!” Tommy yells, getting to his feet, and dodges another swing of the knife. He hates to admit it, but he’s starting to enjoy this. It’s kind of fun to be fighting against. He didn’t realize how much he missed it. It gets rid of the restless feeling he gets from sitting still for too long. He’d still rather be walking and exploring.

The split second of distraction his thought brought was enough for the man to swing again, but this time it wasn’t sloppy or wild. The swing had a clear target and unfortunately Tommy was that target. He threw himself backwards at the last second, but it wasn’t enough to bring him out of range. He stumbles backwards, hands coming up to cover the wound on his chest, a long slash that stretches diagonally from his shoulder to the bottom of his ribs. Instantly, his shirts were soaked in blood and Tommy scowled.

“Now it’s personal, asshole.” Tommy takes a few steps back to regroup and the man smirks. He flips his knife and when he caught it the blade bursts into flames lighting up his grin menacingly.

“Show off,” Tommy scoffs.

Tommy pulls his sword from his inventory as one would draw a blade from a scabbard and levels it with his opponent’s face. He didn’t attack right away. Instead he waited. This was the man’s chance to run.

He didn’t take it.

Instead he lunges forward, flaming knife aiming for Tommy’s neck, prepared to deal the killing blow. Wrong choice.

Tommy gave him the chance to run. It’s his own fault for not taking it. Tommy easily dodges the obvious move and slashes with his sword. The one move was all Tommy needed and time went almost in slow motion as the man’s eyes widened in terror, clinging to the blade’s movement as it buried itself in his flesh. He opened his mouth, presumably to scream, but he never got the chance. Not a second later he was lying limp on the ground, front cleaved open and guts spilling onto the pavement, eyes dulled by the hand of death. Honestly, it’s not his fault. He murdered this man in *self-defense*. Technically, he hasn’t broken any laws! He should have ran when he had the chance.

“Dick,” Tommy mutters, sword disappearing back to his inventory, and approaches the corpse. The body hasn’t disappeared or dropped any items which he found weird. Instead it just laid there. It was his last life then. Oh well, shouldn’t have tried to kill him if he didn’t want to lose it.

Sitting innocently on the ground was a wallet, dusted in a spray of blood, right next to the corpse. Tommy shrugs and pockets it.

“Finders keepers.” It was on the ground, plus it’s not *really* stealing if he’s dead, right? It’s not like dead people need things anyway. Other than ghosts that it, but they don’t count.

He didn't linger after that, just pulled a steak from his inventory and started munching as he walked. The wound sealed as his hunger bar rose until the only evidence anything happened was his bloodied, torn clothing. Stupid fucker, messing up his favorite shirt. Blood is such a bitch to get out.

He realizes that killing someone on his second day in a different universe probably wasn't the *best* idea, especially with how strict this world is with this kind of stuff, but it was self-defense! Just because murder is supposedly a 'violent crime' doesn't mean he should get arrested for it! Back on the Smp he never would have had to worry about getting arrested since the other guy attacked first. Even if he did attack first he still probably would have gotten away with it. If everyone who committed murder on the Smp was in jail there'd be like three people who *weren't* in jail.

"Are you alright?" Tommy looks up, and further up because holy shit the fucker is tall, and comes face to face with someone dressed in a suit. Their name tag said Enderwalk and Tommy distantly remembered seeing something about them on a blog about vigilante's. It takes a moment for the question to register and once it does he looks at the other in confusion.

"Of course I'm alright, the fuck are you asking for?"

"You're covered in blood," comes the vigilante's nervous response as he points towards Tommy's shirt. All it takes is a quick look down to realize why he's been stopped. Right, he looks like he's on death's door with his shirt like this. No one ever cared about that on the Smp. He walked around in bloody shirts all the time and no one ever gave a rat's ass. This world is weird.

"I'm fine, asshole got me with a knife. No big deal," Tommy shrugs. "Bitch," he tacks on just for the hell of it. The vigilante only looks worried.

"Are you sure? That looks pretty bad-"

"I'm *fine*," Tommy rolls his eyes. "All healed up, see?" He pushes aside the rip in his shirts and shows off the fresh scar on his chest, careful not to show any others. "All good." Tommy looks up at the person and gets a really good look at them. They look like Ranboo.

The same half-and-half look Ranboo had, but with a mask and glasses over their face. It can't be Ranboo, he's dead. Just because he's in another universe doesn't mean they're suddenly alive again. It's ridiculous. All this is doing is giving him false hope. Ranboo is dead. He's dead on the Smp, so he's dead here. Just because they look similar enough to be twins doesn't mean it's them. It's just a coincidence. A scary accurate coincidence.

"If you're sure, he responde, but still looked uneasy. Tommy sighs.

"I am *fine*. I'm going home now anyway." He wasn't. "Takes more than a little cut to take me down."

"If you're sure-"

“What’s going on?” Oh great, another vigilante. All he wanted to do was explore and now he’s stuck dealing with some nosy pricks. Some short-ass motherfucker who is staring at him like he’s from another planet with his slender man looking sidekick. The other planet thing isn’t too far from the truth actually.

“I was just heading home,” Tommy repeats. “Now, if you’ll excuse me.” He tries to push past the shorter one, Aries if the name tag was correct which they always are, but the other stands like a brick wall and doesn’t move a muscle. “Are you made of fucking brick? Let me through.”

“You should be going to the hospital with injuries like that,” Aries insists, arms crossed and eyes narrowed in suspicion.

“And like I told the tall bitch, I am fine,” he enunciates the last three words, but the man only seems more suspicious. “It’s even scarred over already.” He huffs and pushes aside the rip again to show the scar. “Not a big deal. Can I go home now?”

“I’m glad you’re not hurt,” he says, not meaning it in the slightest. “Why are you out so late anyway?” Well fuck.

“Is it a crime to go on a walk?”

“I don’t know, you tell me.” Before Tommy can lunge at the bitch the taller one steps in between them.

“You’re free to go, sorry for the misunderstanding,” they say.

“Thank you,” Tommy nods hastily, turning to walk back to his apartment. He walks away confidently, ignoring the vigilante’s as they take to the roofs following him as he walks. Looks like he’s going home after all. If they find out he was lying they might make the connection between him and the dead body a few blocks down and he’s not ready to get arrested so soon. Chills run down his spine at the thought of Pandora’s Vault and getting thrown into this world’s version of the place.

He finally reaches his apartment and glances discreetly at the pair as they watch from the building over. He climbs the stairs to his apartment and walks over to the window facing the vigilante’s. He smiles condescendingly and gives them a small wave before shutting the curtains.

He peaks through the side of his eyes to see them talk for a minute or two before Enderwalk grabs Aries and they disappear in a flurry of purple particles. Right, definitely not Ranboo. He couldn’t teleport.

What to do now? He needs some fun in his life. He can’t remember the last time he got to enjoy himself without worrying about the next oncoming disaster. It’s time he goes gambling! One quick clothing change later, a copy of the same outfit because why change something if it works, and a tally of his new money and he’s off!

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“What do you mean I’m not allowed in the casino?” Tommy shouts, scowling at the bouncer with his arms crossed, getting into the slightly taller man’s face.

“You’re too young,” the guard repeats for what must be the hundredth time, but Tommy’s not giving up. He’s getting into this casino if it’s the last thing he does!

“Bullshit!” What faulty logic says he can’t gamble at a fucking casino! It’s literally what they’re made for! So what if he’s ‘not a legal adult’ it didn’t matter before so why the hell should it matter now! “I’m twenty!” he declares, you know, like a liar.

“Do you have an ID?”

“The fuck is an ID?”

“No ID, no entry.”

“Fuck you!” The great Tommy Innit, biggest man ever, shall not be denied!

“Is there a problem here?” The smooth, deep voice cuts through the air like a razor making the guard stiffen, back straighter than Tommy thought possible, his stoic face shifting into one aching to fear. Tommy whips his head around to face the newcomer.

“Who do you-” Tommy’s words fail him as he finally realizes who it was that disrupted his reasonable conversation he’d been having with the guard like the adult he definitely is. Tommy’s eyes widen and he looks towards the man in shock.

“Sir,” the guard says with a poorly hidden waver in his voice. “This child is attempting to enter the casino.”

“Screw you, I’m not a fucking child! I’m old enough!” Tommy yells at the guard, turning to keep both men in his vision he curses him out. The newcomer shifts his body weight drawing Tommy’s attention back to him. If Tommy didn’t know it wasn’t possible he would have said the man stepped right out of the Smp. He looked exactly the same right down to the scar on his face, but at the same time there was something inherently different about him. He felt off in a way Tommy couldn’t place. It’s the same feeling you get when someone’s moved everything in your house an inch to the left and it’s driving you crazy because you can’t figure out what’s wrong, but you know there’s *something* off.

“We can’t have that, now can we?” The man’s scar stretches as he smiles, one that sends shivers down his spine, and the milky white of his injured eyes stares deeper into his soul the longer he looks at it. Even so he can’t look away. He stares into the face of Quackity, one of the closest friends he had on the Smp and one of the few that stuck around until the bitter end. He still has the same yellow gold wings and the same shimmering feathers fanning behind his ears that all avians have. The same eyes and scar. Hell, even his outfit was the same with his white button down and suspenders. It was surreal. How could someone look so similar to someone he’s known for years and yet so different at the same time?

He admits he probably should have expected this. He’s in *Las Nevadas*. Sure, it’s a district instead of its own country, but that doesn’t mean he wouldn’t still be in charge. He did make

the place after all.

“Why don’t we go back to my office? We can have a little *chat*.” Tommy couldn’t see why Quackity would be so quick to want to talk to him, but he’s curious so he might as well go along with it. Hopefully his decision doesn’t land him dead in a ditch somewhere.

The guard gulps, but Tommy ignores it, puffing his chest in portrayed confidence. “Sure thing big man.” He steps forward, but the guard’s hand lands on his shoulder. He turns and gives the man the harshest glare he could, shoulder burning at the contact. The guard looks at him with hesitation for a second before removing his hand and stepping between him and Quackity.

“He’s just a kid,” the guard pleads. What the fuck is going on? “He doesn’t know any better.”

“I assure you,” Quackity responds, voice dark and eyes glaring at the man who shrinks back at the look. “I will not harm him.” The guard nods and reluctantly steps back to his post, the motion jerky and nervous as he glances back at Tommy. Quackity doesn’t stop his glare and when he finally turns his attention away the guard practically deflates with relief. Quackity turns to Tommy. “Shall we go?”

“Sure,” Tommy responds, slightly less confident than before and throws a quick glance at the cowering guard before following Quackity into the busy streets. People watch closely as the two walk, people gambling and drinking their nights away around them, but Tommy pays no mind to the staring eyes as he ignores everything Wilbur had ever taught him about stranger danger.

Quackity walks with the confidence of a man who owns the world, sauntering through the streets without a care in the world, bright lights bathing him in a rainbow of colors, but even that couldn’t take away from how intimidating his mere presence was. People stepped out of his path and would roughly drag the people who weren’t paying attention out of his way, whether they seemed to know the person or not. Every person there stared at him with a mix of fear and respect, mostly fear, and some even tilted their heads in signs of respect. Big Q’s done well for himself here.

They arrive at a tall building, the tallest in the district, and enter through the front doors. He sees a flash of orange disappear around a corner as they walk into a small room, but it was too quick to make out anything else. Quackity presses a button and stands facing the doors. Awkwardly Tommy follows the action and the doors slide shut as another flash of orange disappears around a corner. The last thing Tommy sees of the mysterious person is a pair of eyes, a green so dark they neared brown in color.

The room Tommy and Quackity are in starts to rise and Tommy startles, grabbing for the railing and crouching towards the ground.

“What the fuck,” he breathes and looks around frantically.

Quackity tilts his head. “Have you never been in an elevator before?” Elevator! This is not a fucking elevator! Where’s the soul sand? The water? Is this because of that fucking electricity shit? What the hell?

“Fuck no,” he snaps, gritting his teeth to keep his panic internal. Quackity hums and gives him a curious look before turning back to the doors. The entire time the room rises, which is a long time because for some reason the office is on the top fucking floor, Tommy keeps his eyes on the doors and his hands gripped tight on the rails. He does *not* like this. He’s never going in one of these death traps ever again after this. He doesn’t care if he has to fall down every flight of stairs to do it, he’s not riding this shit again. *Ever*.

Why is it so slow!

The second the doors open Tommy’s out and standing on stable ground again. “Oh thank fuck,” he whispers, happy to be free from the tiny rising box of death. Quackity walks out and starts down the hall, Tommy jogging slightly to catch up, and enters another room. If this is another elevator he will commit murder. Again. Tommy, apprehensively, walks in and takes in his surroundings as he makes his way to the seat in front of a desk.

Quackity lowers gracefully into his seat, the picture of poise, and gestures for Tommy to take the seat across from him. Tommy complies and Quackity leans forward, elbows placed on the desk, fingers clasped together under his chin.

“Now that we’re here, care to tell me why someone so young was trying to get into my casino?”

“I’m not a child,” Tommy growls through gritted teeth.

“I never said you were.”

“It was implied,” Tommy shoots back. “Asshole.” The man only stares at him with an amused smile and Tommy’s eyes drift up towards his name tag. Instead of the name Quackity floating above his head the name Jester was in its place. He vaguely remembers reading about a ‘Jester’ at some point. Wasn’t that the name some villain went by? Well shit.

“Apologies,” the man responds with a saccharine smile. “You still haven’t answered my question.”

“I was bored,” Tommy shrugs. “I wanted to gamble.” Gambling’s fun and surprisingly good for distressing. If you’re good at it at least. It helps that he’s *really* good at it. He learned from the best after all.

“Have you gambled before?”

“I have,” Tommy answers. “What of it?”

“Just asking,” Jester shrugs and leans back. “It’s curious for someone of your age to be familiar with it.” His eyes slide from Tommy to a mini bar and spinning his chair to the side he stands and walks over to it. He fixes himself a drink before grabbing something from the mini fridge and pours it into a second glass. Tommy doesn’t know enough about alcohol to know what he made nor does he care even as the second glass is set in front of him.

“It’s only apple juice.” Quackity gestures to the glass in front of Tommy with a smirk. Before Tommy can curse him out, he continues. “Are you well versed in gambling.”

“I guess? I don’t fucking know! Prime, do you always annoy people with dumb questions?” He’s almost starting to regret agreeing to this. If it weren’t for the fact that he missed Smp Quackity he probably would have left already, if he decided to come in the first place. Not that he would ever admit that to anyone *ever*.

“How did you play? Was it with family or did you sneak into a casino somehow?” Jester asks, completely ignoring Tommy’s question.

“Fuck you, you didn’t even answer my question, dickhead,” Tommy mutters, arms crossed. “My friend owned one. Why is this so important to you?” He scowls at the man, tired of him controlling the conversation. They were going in circles and safe to say, Tommy hates it.

“You intrigue me.”

“Really?” Sassing a villain probably isn’t the smartest thing he’s ever done, but he doesn’t really care. If he’s got a problem with it he can go fuck himself.

“You do,” Jester confirms, swirling his glass before taking a sip. Tommy’s scowl deepens as he finally recognizes the drink. Whiskey. There wasn’t a moment Tubbo didn’t smell strongly of the shit when he’d report back in Pogtopia. It’s all Schlatt drank and he didn’t exactly hide it. “There’s something different about you. I don’t know what it is, but it makes me curious and when I’m curious, well, I tend to find the answers I’m looking for. One way or another.”

Jester, leader of Las Nevadas, infamous info broker of the villain underground. His prices were steep, but his results were the best around. You always get what you pay for with Jester and he’d rather not have his life story sold to the highest bidder.

“Sure,” Tommy draws out, the words full of skepticism. “I should get going.” Tommy stands up, slouched over with his hands in his pockets, and Jester leans back, calmly observing, learning. “You won’t let me gamble and I’m tired so goodnight. Bitch.”

“Are you sure?” Jester asks. “Las Nevadas may not be the best place for someone your age, but there are a few places you can go. Besides, you didn’t drink your juice. Why not stick around for a while?”

“I’ll come back later or something.” Tommy shrugs his shoulders, hands still in his pockets, and starts walking out of the office. Hopefully next time he’ll be allowed to have some fun and not have to deal with bitches calling him a child.

“Goodbye,” Jester says. “Sorry, but I don’t seem to have caught your name?”

“Tommy.”

“Goodbye Tommy.”

“Whatever.” As happy as he is to see his old friend he can’t help but be aware of how different everything is. The feeling persisted throughout the conversation, a nagging voice



whispering that it's not the same, and it put him on edge. He can't put into words how odd it is to look into the eyes of someone you've gone to war and back with, someone that you consider a friend and would trust with your life, and yet not know a single thing about them. Quackity doesn't even know who he is, not really.

Maybe one day they can be close again, but it won't be the same. He won't even entertain that idea. He won't get any of those relationships back, he can't. Those friendships were forged through mutual hardship and life or death situations that pulled them together in a stand together or die mentality. Here, they haven't had any of that. He's had none of those harrowing experiences with anyone. Here, he's the only one who knows any of that happened. He's the only one who knows about the wars and the fighting and the death that's followed him and everyone else on the Smp for years and it's never going to be the same. He will never again have what he had back on the Smp.

Deep down some part of him is glad for it.

He doesn't linger on the walk from Las Nevadas, taking the stairs down because that elevator shit can go back to the Nether where it belongs, and is back at his apartment long before the sun is set to rise. He lays down on his bed, but he doesn't sleep. He doesn't see the point. Why waste time sleeping when there aren't any mobs? He could sleep for the sake of it, but he doesn't feel like it. His mind is racing, thinking over every little interaction he's had since arriving, and he can't imagine sleeping even if he wanted to. Instead he sits up and summons his laptop.

It's time he looks up the world's life system. It's be useful to know if he ever makes any enemies. Better to know for sure that they're dead for good than risk them trying to mess up the life he's trying to make for himself.

He types in the search and scans the results, but they only make him more confused. He changes the search, focusing on keywords more than an actual question, and presses enter. Inconclusive. Again and again he searched, but he couldn't seem to get a straight answer. Did everyone have different life counts here? Every article he reads mentions death like it's permanent. After roughly an hour of searching and reading every article he could he finally seemed sure in his conclusion. Everyone here has only one life. At least he's on even footing with them. On the other hand, that also means he definitely murdered a man last night.

With the thought of lives fresh in his mind Tommy turns over his left arm, willing his hearts to fade into view. The first three were blacked out and faded, more so than before he left. The fourth, one that few had, was tangled in acid green string and dripped with the feeling of dread and wrong. This was not a natural life and it was something he felt down to his bones every time he acknowledged it, even if it is 'dead' now.

What drew his attention was a new heart. Unlike the other four this one isn't faded or cracked. It was blood red and a feeling of hope and belonging settled into his chest, negating the feeling of the other heart. It looked almost the same as the original three did with one key difference. There was a white symbol on it. A swirling loop that curled in on itself crossing over and over as he followed the path with his eyes. He has no clue what it means.

With a single thought the hearts disappear from view and he turns over his arm, eyes falling back to his laptop. While he would look into it now he has more pressing curiosities. He's sure the symbol wouldn't change anything anyway. It's just a pretty design.

He dives back into his continuous research and consumes more and more information about his new surroundings. Time runs away from him as his eyes take in more and more, a slight headache pulsing in his skull going ignored as his mind latches onto another article. He doesn't stop until the sun shines through the drapes he forgot to close and right into his face, burning his already aching eyes.

"Fuck!" he shouts, hands flying to cover his eyes. "Fucking sun!" He rubs at his eyes with the heels of his hands and keeps his head turned away from the window as he tries to jerk the drapes closed without looking. Drapes finally closed, he lowers his hands and walks to the kitchen, grumbling under his breath as he walks. There wasn't much in the kitchen, a few loaves of bread and some water bottles made of plastic which he prefers over the glass bottles he's used to. No more having to get a new bottle every time it, inevitably, falls and breaks.

"I don't have much left," he mutters looking over his meager food supply. He needs to get his hands on some more food. His mind drifts back to the notes from the gods and groans. "Fuck, I'm going to have to get a job, aren't I?"

"Fuck," he whines again for good measure and slams the fridge back shut. In his inventory there was only one steak and a partially eaten apple left. He groans and closes the window with a wave of his hand. What is he supposed to do? He doesn't want to get a job! He *could* steal, but he's supposed to be making a better life for himself and XD told him to avoid stealing. He did say not to break *too* many laws, implying that he was allowed to break a few, but he'd rather not make a habit of stealing again. Even if he could, technically, make it his job. He knows if he goes back to stealing he'll just get stuck in the same loop as before and the whole point of this is *not* to go back to that. He flops onto the couch, limbs flung around haphazardly and hanging off the edge. What else is he good at?

"Sewing!" That's it! He can sew! He's, might he say, the best around. He did make the L'Manburg uniforms after all. And Fundy's jacket and Quackity's election suit and pretty much all the clothes on the server, in the beginning at least. Those assholes couldn't sew for shit. Now that he's gone Niki's probably getting landed with most of the sewing since she did a lot of what he didn't do. Fundy too since he did teach him and bit in early L'Manburg and Pogtopia. It was a good way to get his mind off things and Wilbur kept messing up his coat so he had to patch it up a lot.

Should he start job searching now or should he wait a little longer? How does one find a job anyway? He's never had one before, not really anyway. He *was* the vice president for a bit, but that doesn't really count since he got exiled before he could really do anything. Does brewing drugs in the back of a van count?

The sun shines in his eyes once more as if to yell at him to get on with it. He groans. Might as well get it over with. He rolls off the couch, flipping off the sun because he can, and lands hard on the floor. He trudges out the door and makes sure the door is locked behind him. He doesn't bother changing because fuck changing, his clothes aren't that dirty anyway.

As he emerges into the street in true daylight for the first time since arriving he hisses, the bright light burning his eyes, and sends one more middle finger the sun's way. He pulls out his last steak as he walks and rips off a bite with his teeth. People stare and give him a wide berth as he walks, but he only glares and keeps moving.

"Fuck off and let me eat!" he yells at a particularly annoying person who was giving him one of the dirtiest looks he's ever seen. "Asshole." He shoves the rest of his steak into his mouth and decides to head towards the wealthier districts. He doesn't want to leave L'Manburg, but he does get pretty close to the border. If he looks just right he can see the edge of Kinoko off in the distance and takes that as his cue to head towards a shopping district.

He spends a while wandering around and finds some pretty nice places, but nowhere for him to work yet. A cafe he makes plans to stop at in the future, a few pre-made clothing stores, some jewelry shops. More and more places pass by, but no tailor's yet. Not until *Clem's Couturier*. A tailor shop with a help wanted sign in the window. It's perfect!

"Found ya bitch." He walks into the shop and the high pitched ringing of a bell sounds through the store. Instantly he was surrounded by a feeling of warmth and comfort. The store was cozy and he could imagine relaxing in a place like this. The dark oak walls and red trimmings vaguely reminded him of a woodland mansion, but before it's infested with mobs.

Formal dresses hang against a wall in every which color and the other is lined with suits and ties and pocket squares and whatever else one was supposed to wear with a suit. A small wheeled rack by the door held more casual clothes and could be seen through the window plastered with fancy, but chipped paint lettering spelling out the store's name. His fingers itched towards the needle and thread left on the counter beside a half sewn shirt, but ignored it as he inspected his surroundings.

On his way to the front counter he passes a few chairs that look one wrong move from crumbling to dust and he makes a note to himself never to sit in one. Towards the back and side just out of view is a raised platform surrounded by mirrors made for custom tailoring and a door labeled 'Dressing Room'.

"Hello dear," a woman greets as she hobbels into the room. She was hunched over with age and had long white hair pulled into a bun behind her head. "How may I help you?" Translucent purple wings flutter softly behind her as she smiles sweetly at the teen.

"I noticed the help wanted sign," he responds only a bit awkwardly. He jabs his finger behind him at the sign hanging in the door window and shifts on his feet. "I'm here for the job."

"That's wonderful!" she exclaims and does a hobbel skip around the counter. For an old woman she sure moves fast when she wants to. "I've had that sign up for ages! I'm glad someone's finally come along to help out. Now, tell me, dear, how much experience do you have?" Her hands are clasped in front of her and Tommy can see the clear hope in her eyes and he's determined not to let her down.

"A good bit," he answers. "I've made a few custom suits before and some jackets. Lots of casual clothing too. I haven't made too many dresses, but I'm a quick learner." He assures the woman rocking back and forth onto his toes.

“That’s perfect!” She claps her hands together quickly a few times, the sound soft and quiet. “You sound like just the person I need! It’s so hard to sew with these old things, it’s about time some help came around.” She chuckles at her own joke and shows off bony, shaking hands and he chuckles alongside her. “When can you start?” If getting a job was this easy then he should have done this ages ago.

“I can start today if you want?” There was a hopeful lilt to his tone and he couldn’t deny how excited he was to fall back into his old hobby.

“Lovely, come along to the back and I’ll get you set up.”

The woman, who later introduced herself as Clementine, was a nice old lady. Definitely kinder than most he’d met. She gave him a tour of the backrooms and pointed out everything he’d need while working there. The fabric was held in a shelf on the wall divided into little cubbies that had a few rolls each and she pulled one out to show him a shimmery fabric he was immediately entranced by. After that was something called a sewing machine which he refuses to go near, needles are just fine thank you. She finished showing him around and where everything was and gestured to the only stable looking chair in the back room. A few orders were placed on a nearby table for him to work through as he sits and finds that the chair is surprisingly comfortable.

He makes a note to convince her to get some new chairs for the front room, once that don’t look like they’re older than Philza Minecraft the oldest of the old, and carefully lifts a shirt from the pile. His hands fell into the familiar pattern of hemming, taking a few inches off the bottom and he relaxed easily for the first time in a long, *long* time. So far he had to admit that he’s starting to like it here and that maybe, just maybe, he can see himself being happy here.

## Chapter End Notes

We've met Quackity! And two vigilantes Tommy's definitely never met before. I wonder who they could be? Who will Tommy meet next? Nobody knows!

# Chapter Three

## Chapter Summary

Tommy meets some new people and finds a routine.

## Chapter Notes

Tw's:

Dead body(not descriptive)

Pretty sure that's all the Tw's we got for this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The week passed by quickly as he settled into his new routine. Work at Clem's in the mornings, grab lunch at a nearby market if his bar was starting to get low, head back to Clem's for the afternoon then head home for the night. He hasn't met anyone else from the Smp yet, but he would swear he's seen Enderwalk and Aries chasing after a criminal once or twice when he was relaxing on the roof. He looked into them a little more after he met them and they were pretty cool so far.

Another thing he looked into was the guy he killed. Turns out he was some up-an-coming criminal and was decently well-known. Luckily no one's connected the murder back to him, not in the last week at least. Apparently Blade and Siren were called to look into it. Why heroes were called in for a generic murder case he has no clue. The Blade did have some kind of blood power thing so maybe they thought he could help or something? He only really skimmed the article.

"It's about time for lunch." Clementine's voice brings him out of his mindless sewing and his focus goes to the time. "Are you going out to eat again?"

"Yeah, I'll head out in a minute. Just want to finish up this stitching." With a few more minutes of weaving and tugging the needle through the fabric the hole he was fixing was closed and tied off and the excess string cut short. He folded up the shirt and placed it in the finished orders pile and tidied up his area.

When he first started using the needle Clementine had laughed and said she didn't like using the 'devil machine' much either. That only solidified his resolve in avoiding the thing. He did turn it on once out of curiosity, but immediately turned it off when as he pressed the pedal to test it out it made noises loud enough to rival even him. It ruined the calm atmosphere! Why

would anyone use the thing when making things by hand was so much better. The great Tommy Innit is better than some matching. Always has and always will be.

“I’m heading out!” He calls into the shop as he dusts off his hands by smacking them together.

“Alright dear,” Clementine responds and shuffles into view. “If you don’t already have plans may I suggest the cafe down the street? Their scones are some of my favorites.”

“I’ll check it out.” He smiles and waves to the woman before pushing open the door and stepping out into the brisk air. It’s not a long walk to the cafe and before he knows it he’s already stepping into the warm air of the cafe. The bell, a lower pitch than the one at Clem’s, sounded through the room and he hears someone walking out from the back. He looks up and freezes at the sight of the familiar person behind the counter.

“Hello and welcome to the Rose Petal cafe! What can I get for you?” Niki smiles at him, words clear despite the distance between them, but they don’t register in Tommy’s brain. It’s Niki, pink hair and all. Niki, the woman who was like a sister to him and all the others during the first war. Niki, the woman who tried to kill him with a Nuke. No, this isn’t that Niki. This is Niki from the new world. Niki the cafe owner not Niki, his would-be assassin. Just *Niki*.

He snaps himself out of his frozen state and forces himself to push past the fear and walk closer with stiff limbs. “Hi.” The word is clipped and nervous and he mentally chides himself. Snap out of it. This isn’t *her*.

“Hello.” Her eyes seem softer than when he first entered and her smile kinder, if that was even possible. “Do you know what you want?” Her voice was kind, oh so kind, and it threw him back to his memories of her bringing him, Tubbo, and Fundy and all the new recruits new pastries to try after a long day of training.

He clears his throat and his eyes flit around the pastry case looking for anything he recognizes. “Uh, not really. I, uh, don’t really recognize most of this.” He chuckles nervously, eyes shifting back to hers, but she only smiles kindly. Not an ounce of menace or alternative motives in sight.

“Would you like a recommendation?”

He exhales in relief. “Oh thank Prime, yes please.”

She chuckles, “How about an apple danish? I always like those.”

“I have no clue what that is.”

“It’s a round pastry with apple pie filling in the center,” she answers, hands making a circle to show the shape and size of the pastry. She then points to the case. “That’s it right there. Top row all the way on the left, next to the turnovers.”

He looks over the pastry and with a nod deems it good enough for the powerful amazing Tommy Innit. “Sounds good, bug man.” His eyes quickly scan the drink menu and settle on

something called hot chocolate. “I want a hot chocolate too.” Hot chocolate is just melted chocolate, right? He has no clue why that would be considered a drink, but he’s going to try it anyway.

“Coming right up.” She makes her way about the space making his drink and while the machine is dripping into the cup she grabs the pastry from the case. “Here or to go?”

“Here.” She nods and places the danish on a plate before pushing it, and the newly filled cup, across the counter to him. She presses a few buttons on the machine next to the dishes before turning her attention to him.

“That’ll be four primes.” Tommy summons his wallet to his hand while keeping his hand hidden from view and starts picking through to grab the money. The first time someone asked him for primes when he was buying something he had no clue what they meant. He’s also pretty sure the store owner called the police on him for attempted theft or something. How was he supposed to know the god he worshiped was a currency here! Later on he found out there was no such thing as Church Prime and that primes were a set payment system instead of the bartering system the Smp had. It was a bit of a surprise, but Tommy’s always been the adaptable type. It’s not like it’s that big of a deal anyway.

“Have a nice day!” Her smile dipped for a moment when he handed her the money and he was sure she was upset, but as quick as the look appeared it was gone and she was smiling again. He shrugged it off and slid into a booth in the back corner of the cafe. His back presses into the booth, facing the door, and he finally takes a closer look at the pastry.

He sends his wallet back to his inventory under the table before poking the apple stuff in the center. His finger comes away coated in a viscous liquid and he pops it into his mouth. It was sweeter than a normal apple and reminded him vaguely of a grapple, but without the power boost that came with it. It was unlike anything he’d ever tasted before.

He seemed to blink and the pastry was gone, shoved into his mouth as he closed his eyes and savored the taste as he chewed. His mouth was still full when he grabbed the warm mug and brought it to his lips. The drink burned his mouth as he drank, but he only drank it faster.

Tommy breathed heavily out his mouth, hands waving to get rid of the burnt feeling, but he couldn’t wipe the smile from his face. “That was the best thing I’ve ever tasted.” He grabs his mug and chugs the last bit of the drink. His throat burned but he couldn’t find it in himself to be upset. Not when the drink was so *good*.

Drink and pastry gone he starts licking his fingers getting every last crumb of the sweet dessert. The light clattering sound of ceramic being placed down startled him and fear floods in washing away any feeling of comfort he had only a second before. He wasn’t paying attention and someone snuck up on him! Fuck fuck fuck-

“You look like you enjoyed that,” a soft voice interrupts his panic and Tommy’s quick to look at the person standing at the end of the table. Niki brings her arms back, without the plate and mug she walked over with, and brushed her hands against her apron.

“Huh?” he responds eloquently and she gestures towards the dishes.

“I thought you’d like more.”

“Oh, um, one second,” he reaches for his pocket ready to bring his wallet from his hot bar.  
“I’ll grab you the mone-”

“It’s on the house,” she assures him and pushes the dishes a little closer, an odd look in her eyes.

“I can’t-” he tries to protest but Niki is nothing if not stubborn.

“I insist,” she presses. “I need a taste tester anyway.” She smiles at him and Tommy sighs, shoulders falling as he pulls the dishes closer. Niki only seems to smile wider at that.

“Thank you.” She accepts the weary smile he sends her way and disappears back to the front counter just as another customer walks in. He sighs again, slumping into the seat. He’s safe this time, but he needs to be more careful. He needs to stay vigilant. He can’t go all soft just because he’s in a new world.

He eats slower with this new round of food and makes sure to really enjoy the meal. Instead of apple the danish had mixed berries and it was just as good as the first. The hot chocolate was somehow even better once he let it get to a more tolerable temperature before drinking it. Melted chocolate, who knew?

He spends the remainder of his lunch break relaxing in the cafe, soaking in the calm atmosphere, and for the first time he didn’t see the need to rush back to Clem’s as soon as he finished eating. He watched Niki zip around serving customers and making coffee and bringing pastries from the back. Each new tray held steaming pastries and smelled heavenly even from his corner away from everything. Each customer was met with a kind smile and friendly conversation. Little kid would walk away with a free pastry and a tired person in the corner tapping at a computer was given a free coffee refill. Every once in a while Niki would look in his direction and he’d rip his eyes away before she saw him staring and focus on the tv for a few minutes before looking back. It was nice seeing the old Niki again even if it’s not *actually* her.

Unfortunately, all good things came to an end, and it was time for him to go back to work. He wouldn’t call work a bad thing, he loves Clem’s, but it was nice to just sit and relax for a bit. He cleans up his area, stacking his dishes and throwing out his trash, before walking out of the cafe without another look back at the pink haired woman he wishes knew him like he knew her.

“How was your lunch?” Clementine asks as he walks in a minute before his break was set to end.

“It was good,” Tommy responds with a calm smile. He sits back down in his preferred chair, grabbed from a dumpster a few days earlier, and pulls over the next order. “I went to that cafe you told me about. It was delicious!”

“I’m glad you like it.” She smiles and returns to counting the money in the till. He smiles back and starts messing with the pattern for a dress set to be made with strawberry printed



fabric.

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“Why are we here again?” Siren whines. He follows close behind his brother as they walk towards an alley swarming with police.

“We’re here because it’s our job,” Blade huffs.

“We’re *heroes*,” Siren responds with narrowed eyes, hands in his pockets as he leans forward to the other hero. “We’re supposed to *fight* crime, not solve it.”

“Stop whining. You’re making me look bad.” Siren’s only response is a middle finger aimed at his brother who subsequently ignores it. “We’re here.” The police shuffle out of the heroes’ way as they duck under the bright yellow caution tape keeping people away. Blade doesn’t bother hiding his eye roll as Siren sends an arrogant greeting the way of some fans trying to get a look at the crime scene.

“Well shit.” Siren creeps forward to get a closer look at the corpse on the ground. “Guess I know why we’re here now,” he mutters and crouches next to the body. He scans it with his eyes and when he doesn’t find anything that stands out he starts to poke it. Blade slaps his hand away from the body and Siren yanks it back, rubbing out the pain. “Asshole.”

“Don’t contaminate the evidence,” Blade scolds muttering an ‘Idiot’ under his breath. The Blade sighs, already done with his brother's stupidity and crouches beside him ignoring Siren mocking him. “The body was found earlier this morning,” Blade informs. “They estimate somewhere around six hours old at the time of discovery.”

“That’s about nine hours now then?” Siren asks, shedding his joking demeanor for what he calls his ‘Hero Mode.’ Blade nods. Siren looks over the body once more. “Definitely a blade,” he says and points to the large wound on the front stretching from shoulder to hip. “Could be a power,” Siren shrugs.

“Sounds about right.” Blade nods along with his words before standing and walking over to the nearest officer. They spoke for a minute while Siren continued to search the body and the surrounding area for clues.

“Anything new?” Siren asks without glancing up as the other returns.

“Nothing. You?”

“Wallet is missing, probably stolen. Robbery gone wrong?”

“Maybe.”

“Try checking for foreign blood,” Siren suggests and stands up, moving to be next to his brother. For a moment nothing happens as the Blade scans the alley, but then his gaze is drawn deeper into the darkness and points into the shadows.

“There.” Siren nods and follows as he’s led to a small amount of blood, small enough that he would have missed it if he didn’t know what to look for.

“Guy must’ve landed a hit,” Siren mutters. “A small injury, right?”

“Probably. There isn’t a blood trail,” Blade answers before looking closer. “It *could* be a bigger injury, but it’s unlikely. Unless they have a healing power or the blood was contained quickly afterwards. Even then there should be more.”

“Small injury then,” Siren confirms.

“I’ll get the police to look into this.” Blade gestures to the blood. “Maybe they’ll get a good lead. Don’t touch anything.”

“Have some faith dear brother.” Siren blinks rapidly up at the Blade with a hand over his heart, but Blade just walks away. Siren rolls his eyes fondly and decides to search the alley more while Blade’s gone. He didn’t find anything. Not a single clue. It already seemed like a deadend.

A week passed, still without a single clue, and the case was closed, much to the dismay of Siren.

“Well that was a waste of a week,” Wilbur groans and throws himself onto the couch. His form ripples and shifts as his blue, purple, and white scales retreat into his skin and his eyes dim from the glowing green sclera of his phantom form. His ears shorten and round out leaving only a small point and his teeth dull down from their sharper appearance. He sinks into the cushions and closes his eyes, hands crossed behind his head.

“It wasn’t a waste.” Techno defends sitting in a wooden chair while setting his boar skull mask on the table beside him. Wilbur still had no idea how his brother could stand to wear the thing for hours on end. He put it on once and had taken it off after only a few minutes. The thing was uncomfortable as fuck.

“Yeah well I could have been sleeping so *waste*.”

“Sorry you couldn’t find anything, mate,” Phil says to the two as he carries plates of food into the room. The plates are placed on the table and Phil swats at Techno’s mask. “What did I say about hero equipment on my dinner table!” Techno grumbles to himself, Wilbur swears he heard something about an ‘old man’ and a ‘retirement home’, before standing and grabbing the mask, leaving the room temporarily to change.

“There couldn’t have been even a scrap of evidence?” Wilbur complains to the sky.

“Didn’t you mention some blood?” Phil asks, coming back with another plate of food. He walks over to his son and nudges him with his knee. Wilbur swats him away and turns over trying to ignore the man. “Get up you lazy lump, I didn’t make dinner for nothing.”

“But *sleep*,” Wilbur whines.

“Don’t care, get up,” Phil chides. “And go change. I refuse to let you eat in your hero suit.”

Wilbur rolls his eyes, but gets up and slouches to his room. He changes quickly and kicks his costume into the corner like the responsible hero he is before walking back to the dining room. He finds his brother and father already sitting at the table eating without him.

“You started without me!” Wilbur rushes over to his seat and groans when he realizes the marshmallows on the candied yams were practically gone. “Greedy assholes.”

“L.”

“Fuck you.”

“Not my fault-”

“It literally is! You’re the one who took all the marshmallows!” Wilbur gestures wildly to Techno’s plate which held an ungodly amount of marshmallows.

“-you should have been faster.”

“Boys,” Phil scolds and they quiet down minus the annoyed grumbling from Wilbur as he starts dishing some potatoes onto his plate. Wilbur’s eyes light up as he gets an idea and grabs his fork. Sneakily he tries to steal some of the marshmallows from Techno’s plate, but all he got from his efforts was his fork slapped away and a glare. Wilbur sighed, body folding into itself in disappointment, as he pushed his marshmallowless potatoes around his plate with a pout. “You never did answer my question.”

Wilbur sighs again, “Yeah, there was some blood, but they didn’t find a match.”

“No match? That’s odd.” Phil looks into his food quizzically, fork held in his hand as he tries to think.

“The guy doesn’t exist apparently,” Techno adds once he swallows his latest bit of potato. Wilbur once again tries, and fails, to steal the marshmallows, Techno barely paying attention as he swats Wilbur’s fork away with his. “They checked outside the Esempii too.”

“And they still found nothing?” Phil hums as he thinks, but can’t figure out any other ideas.

Wilbur cuts into the conversation with a sigh. “The less we have to think about that nightmare case the better.”

“I’m sure it wasn’t *that* bad,” Phil chuckles.

“It was.”

“It’s only out of mind until whoever it was kills again,” Techno says.

“Don’t remind me,” Wilbur groans and lets his head thunk against the table.

“Whoever did it will think they got away with it and do it again.”

“They did get away with it,” Wilbur points out.

“For now.”

Wilbur, in an effort to end the conversation, decides to shove as much food as possible into his mouth at once to the chagrin of his brother.

“Careful, mate,” Phil warns. “You’ll choke doing that.” Wilbur flips him off and shoves his spoon in his mouth and promptly begins to choke. Phil starts laughing and Techno watches on mildly amused as Wilbur coughs. “I warned you.”

“Fuck you,” he curses once the food was dealt with.

“It’s your own fault, mate,” Phil laughs. Wilbur only sends another middle finger his way before digging back into his food significantly slower.

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“Welcome back Tommy,” Niki greets as Tommy comes bounding into the cafe, nearly slamming the door into the wall as he does so. He has the sense of mind to look mildly sheepish for a second before brushing it off and approaching her with his usual gusto.

“Niki, biggest man ever, how are you today?”

“Someone’s in a good mood,” she laughs and leans on the counter. “I’m doing well. How are you on this fine afternoon?”

“Niki, I am great,” he answers, enunciating each word. “I am absolutely poggers.”

“Poggers?”

“Fabulous, amazing, the most handsome ever,” he clarifies, hand pressed to his chest.

She rolls her eyes fondly. “And what would the ‘most handsome man ever’ like for lunch?”

“A hot chocolate, of course,” he starts. “And one of those little cake things. The ones that look like butter.” He points to a tray of small round desserts with cooked strawberries on top.

“A cheesecake?”

“Yeah, that. The one with the strawberries.” She nods and he bounces on his toes as she grabs the pastry from the case. By the time she has his drink and food together he already has the primes in hand. Tommy was glad he got another chance with Niki. He was devastated when he found out she tried to kill him and to get another shot at being friends, even if it is another universe, is better than he could have ever asked for. He refuses to waste his second chance.

“Order up!” Niki pushes the food across the counter and pulls her hand away before he can give her the money. He stares her down with narrowed eyes and without looking away he moves his hand to the tip jar and drops in the money. She sighs and Tommy grins, impish and proud. “Stubborn brat,” she chuckles.

“Thanks Niki!” He grabs his order and scurries away to his usual seat in the booth half hidden away in the back corner of the cafe. He’s been starting to ease up on his usually strict danger policies, but he makes sure to keep everything in mind. Don’t turn your back to doors. Don’t relax or let down your guard just because you’re eating. Anyone can be an enemy and anything can become a threat. He is always ready for anything and refuses to be caught unawares when situations like that are easily preventable.

Of course, that is exactly what happens. The bell rings and Tommy spares half a glance towards the door to see the new customer only to do a double take the next second. Wilbur Soot was walking into the cafe with a smile on his face and a happy greeting on his tongue as he grandly made his way to the counter. Wilbur *fucking* Soot.

Wilbur and Niki talk loudly and happily while Tommy just stares, eyes never leaving the tall man’s frame. Wilbur is *here*. It’s not the Wilbur he knows but it’s still *him*. Prime they look so similar. The same face. The same yellow sweater he, and later Ghostbur, wore. The same round glasses Wilbur used to wear because he thought they made him look smart. The only difference was the hair. The streak of white hair that stood out on his brother’s head wasn’t there. He looks like he crawled straight out of L’Manburg. He looks like Tommy’s brother.

“Tommy?” The call of his name brings Tommy back to the present and away from the softly sung memories of his happiest times in life. Niki waves him over with a big smile and Tommy hesitates but ultimately makes his way over.

His hands shook and he shoved them into his pockets like that would make them stop. He doesn’t stand as close to the counter as he usually does, a few feet between him and the people he knows but doesn’t. It wasn’t far enough away to be awkward, but it wasn’t necessarily a comfortable talking distance either. It was also well out of reaching distance.

“Tommy, this is Wilbur,” Niki introduces. “Wilbur, this is Tommy.”

“Nice to meet you.” Wilbur sticks out his hand to shake, but Tommy makes no move to take it. Wilbur’s smile falters and after an awkward moment slowly lowers it to his side.

“Sorry,” Tommy apologizes without meaning it. “Not much of a toucher.” Not since his revival. Not since every touch sends him back to that cell and that fucking potato as it hit him over and over and *over and-*

“Oh, uh, sorry,” Wilbur responds, bringing Tommy back to the world around him. Tommy forces his body back into the falsely relaxed position he usually maintains, dropping his shoulders to hide how tense he is. Wilbur awkwardly shoves his hands in his pockets and now their two strangers-but-not standing in front of a cafe counter with their hands in their pockets.

“S’alright,” Tommy forces himself to respond, voice quieter than he intended. That’s it, he needs an out. “Niki.” She jumps slightly at the shock of being suddenly addressed, but was quick to compose herself. Tommy will admit his voice was probably a little harsher than he meant it to be, but pushes on anyway. “Got any more pastries?”

“Sure, how about...” She scans the case and after a moment gestures to an orange-brown muffin with brown sugar on top. “Does a pumpkin muffin sound good?” Tommy nods and she turns away to grab the requested bakery item.

“You like pumpkin muffins?” Wilbur asks, trying to start up a conversation. At first Tommy considered not responding, but in the end decided that even if this Wilbur wasn’t his brother he can’t bring himself to ignore him.

“Don’t know. I’ve never had one before so...” Tommy shrugs.

“You’ve never had one of Niki’s pumpkin muffins?” Wilbur gasps and with a shake of Tommy’s head Wilbur’s laying against the counter with his hand over his heart like he’d been wounded. “This is a travesty! I won’t let this stand! Niki! Niki, hurry with that muffin! We need a muffin, Niki!” Against his better judgment Tommy begins to smile. It could barely be counted as one, but it was the most he’d smiled around Wilbur in a while.

Barely a minute later Niki returns with a slightly warmed muffin sitting on a plate and hands it over with a flourish of movement and a deep bow. “Your muffin, my liege.” Tommy’s smile only gets wider as he takes the plate and reaches for his pocket ready to hide the summoning of his wallet to grab his primes. Wilbur beats him to the punch and hands Niki the money before his hand gets even halfway there.

“Hey, no, I can pay for myself,” Tommy protests, ready to hand over his money anyway.

“Nope! I want the honor of buying you your first pumpkin muffin,” Wilbur responds with way to much pride to be talking about a fucking muffin.

“The fuck is with people trying to buy me shit all the time?”

“Maybe it’s ‘cause you’re just a wittle bitty baby,” Wilbur coos. “We can’t let a baby pay for himself. That’d be irresponsible of respectable adults such as ourselves.” Tommy stares blankly at Wilbur as the words process before glaring.

“I’m not a fucking baby!” Tommy yells. Wilbur and Niki laugh and Tommy watches them with the most affronted look he’s ever had in his life. He’s offended. This is the worst. He will never recover from this atrocity. Assholes, the both of them. How dare they make fun of him, Tommy Innit! The biggest man ever! “Oh fuck you! You are a bitch Wilbur.”

They only continue to laugh so he takes his anger out on the muffin, biting into it angrily. Barely a second later this anger is gone and he’s eagerly taking another bite. “How is this so good?” The laughter calms down and is quickly gone as he devours the muffin. His hunger bar was almost full, but was empty enough that he was gladly able to finish his muffin. He’ll put the rest of his cheesecake into his inventory for later.

“Told you,” Wilbur smirks.

“Never said it wasn’t,” Tommy counters. “Niki’s the best when it comes to baking.”

“Don’t exaggerate,” the woman in question denies with a laugh, hand waving dismissively.

“Wrong!” Tommy responds, closer to his usual volume. “You are the best baker ever and you’re not allowed to deny it!”

“I-”

“No.”

“Bu-”

“No.”

“Tomm-”

“No.”

She sighs and sends him a playfully exasperated look that he preens at. Tommy Innit is back! He is just the best at annoying people. Just as it should be. Niki finally accepts the compliment and Tommy nods proudly.

“What’s your favorite?” Wilbur asks, gesturing to the pastry case. Kinda random, but okay.

“I’m not sure,” he answers. “Still haven’t tried most of them yet, hell I haven’t heard of a lot of these before last week, but so far I’d have to say pretty much anything with apples in them. The apple danish I had is definitely top five.” Wilbur nods along before he seems to pause for a second, face shifting to confusion as he thinks. “The fuck are you thinking so hard for?”

“Why haven’t you heard of them?” Wilbur asks.

“Why is that important?”

“I’m curious,” Wilbur responds with a shrug, but Tommy can see a look in his eyes. One he can remember his Wilbur having from time to time. He can’t quite remember what it meant, but Tommy isn’t in the mood to find out.

“None of your business bitch,” Tommy spits.

“Hey, don’t shoot,” Wilbur jokes, hands up by his head. “It was just a question.”

“Whatever,” Tommy mutters, his eyes darting to the clock. “I have to go. My break ends soon. See you later, Niki. It was shit meeting you Wilbitch, go choke on a carrot.” Wilbur sputters in shock and Tommy can’t help but snicker at the action. Gods, his face was priceless. He jogs over to his table and grabs his plate and mug. “I’ll bring back the dishes tomorrow!” he shouts behind him as he runs out, Niki’s laughter echoing behind him.

With a wave of his hand he sends the cheesecake to his inventory and continues sipping at his hot chocolate as he walks. He doesn’t rush, but he does make sure he’s not late. He finishes the drink right as he’s walking up to the door and sends the mug to his inventory as he opens the door and walks in.

“Clementine! I’m back!” he calls into the shop.

“I’m in the back dear,” comes the muddled voice and he follows it to the fabric shelves where Clementine was poking through looking for a specific fabric. “There’s someone coming in for a jacket fitting later today. Would you like to take it?”

“Would I!” Tommy responds, spirit’s officially lifted. He bounces on his toes in excitement. His first fitting since the Smp! Fuck yeah!

Clementine chuckles. “I’m glad you’re excited.” She grabs a few papers from nearby and hands them to him along with a jacket base. The paper on top had the words ‘Fitting request form’ stamped across the top with barely legible chicken scratch writing answering all the questions. He squints trying to read it and wonders how the hell she managed to. “His name is Fundy and for the most part you have creative liberty over the design. Everything you need to know is there.” She taps the papers in his hands.

“Fundy?” What are the odds? He’s already met this world’s Wilbur today and now he’s meeting Wilbur’s son too? Small world. One of his biggest regrets on the Smp was not being there for his nephew when he needed him. He has a second chance to fix things and he refuses to make the same mistake again. Sure, they’re not *technically* family, but he’d be damned if he didn’t at least try to befriend him.

She nods. “He’s a lovely fellow. Been here once or twice before though I don’t quite remember what I made him.”

“Good to know,” Tommy smiles, grip tight on the paper. It’s alright. It’s not like it’s the alternate version of his nephew who has no clue who he is. No big deal. He’s definitely not freaking out. Nope. Just your average, everyday problem.

“He should be here in a half an hour,” Clementine says and pulls a roll of fabric from the shelf. “I know you’ll do well.”

“Thanks, Clem.” He smiles softly at the old woman and she returns it before hobbling away with the fabric roll held close to her chest, which is impressive considering how heavy some of them can be.

He makes quick work of gathering all the supplies needed for the fitting while he readies his mind. Pin? Check. Fabric? Check. Measuring tape? Check. Base coat for sizing? Check. Ready to go.

As he waits he carefully reads over the order form the best he can through the messy writing. The only specification was that he wanted the main part of the jacket to be black. Unintentionally his mind drifts to the jacket he gifted his nephew years before. Black jacket with four stripes of color wrapped around. Tommy swore he hadn’t seen the fox hybrid without it once since he got it. He shakes himself out of the memory and focuses back on the present. He needs to keep himself in the here and now. No point in getting stuck in the past.

He’s not in the Smp anymore. He’s in an entirely different universe. He can’t fall back on his memories and the relationships he had there. These are different people. Maybe if he keeps reminding himself of that he’ll stop seeing the people he knew instead of the ones right in front of him. Fundy doesn’t know who he is and he’s not supposed to know Fundy either.



He's not his nephew, he's a stranger, but Tommy can't help that he still cares for him the same. He doesn't want to forget. He doesn't want to forget all they've done together. He doesn't want to forget all the wrong he's done to him. He wants to fix it, not ignore it.

Unlike most of his relationships on the Smp there wasn't a key moment where things fell apart. The only moment he could think of was when he was trying to get information with Techno, but they hadn't talked much before then either so it wasn't exactly a point where they drifted apart. He did apologize for what he did and Fund accepted it, but that didn't stop him from feeling guilty. He shouldn't have taken out his anger on the other and he shouldn't have tried so hard to suck up to Techno. He knows that, but there isn't anything he can do about it now but try to make up for it. Fundy and him didn't talk much after that even after he apologized and Tommy wouldn't be surprised if he hated him, he wouldn't blame him. Either way, Tommy never stopped loving his nephew.

He's snapped out of his thoughts by the door creaking open and a familiar redhead enters the store. His tail swung contently behind him and he radiated calm with a soft smile on his face. His not-nephew looks around the shop before finally noticing Tommy. Their eyes meet and Fundy pales, hands fiddling nervously in front of him.

"Hey, uh, my name is Fundy. I-I'm here for a fitting?"

"Hello, Fundy. My name is Tommy and I'll be the one doing your fitting today." Tommy held out his hand with a kind smile and after a moment of hesitation the other shook it lightly. Tommy ignores the slight discomfort and continues to smile. He wanted to avoid the awkward interaction with Wilbur and if that means dealing with a handshake to do it then he's been through worse and he can put up with a second long handshake.

Fundy's claws scrape against Tommy's wrist as he pulls his hand away and Tommy can't stop his mind from drifting back to the early days of L'Manburg when Fundy would still forget about his claws. Every time he was around someone would walk away with scratches from the child. Gods, that was so long ago. Back when Fundy was still shorter than Tubbo and the war hadn't officially been declared yet. Back before Wilbur decided Fundy was old enough to fight.

All things considered the appointment went pretty smoothly. Fundy was a return customer and knew the gist of how things worked even if it was obvious how nervous he was the whole time. He was probably expecting Clementine to do the fitting and doesn't like new people.

The jacket was easy to pin and close enough to his actual size that there wasn't much that needed to be taken in. "And," Tommy stretched the word as he placed the final pin. "We're good! Just be careful when you take it off so the pins don't get you."

"Alright, ah, thank you." Fundy moves his hands around, going to take off the jacket one way before pausing and trying another before starting all over again. He finally starts pulling it off and struggles around the pins. Tommy does his best to hold back his laugh, hand held over his face to his grin. Fundy was being so unnecessarily careful of the pins he was making the entire situation way more complicated than it needed to be and ended up getting stuck.

Tommy moves forward and gives a light tug on the edge of the sleeves, carefully pulling it off so the pins don't get stuck. "Thanks," Fundy mutters sheepishly.

"It's no problem," Tommy responds, smoothing the fabric over a mannequin.

"When should I be back?" Fundy was fiddling with his hands again and his tail was wrapped around his leg in a form of comfort. What about him is making Fundy so nervous? Is it something he did?

"It depends, but it should be within the week. When it's done we'll call you and let you know." Tommy returns to the counter and faces the other as he speaks. Out of view, Tommy grips one hand in the other hard enough that his knuckles turn white from the force. He doesn't want him to leave yet. It's too soon. He needs to apologize and make it up to him and- this isn't him. He pries his hands apart and instead fiddles with a ripped piece of fabric under the counter.

"Thanks again," Fundy says with a dip of his head and then he's gone. Tommy stands there for a long while just thinking, doing his best to put his mind in order. That wasn't his nephew. He sure as hell looks like him but he has to remember that they're different people. For Primes sake they even act the same. Sure he was a bit more nervous, but they're still so similar. His eyes drift to the jacket sitting innocently on the mannequin and his hands itch toward it. Might as well get some work done.

He rolls out the base fabric and cuts out each piece of the pattern making sure to leave a little extra sewing room on the edges. Once he has everything laid out he turns his mind to the details. He stares at the shelves of fabric and his eyes drift to a few familiar colors. After a moment of deliberation, he grabs the red, yellow, blue, and gray-silver fabric and begins cutting strips. He rests in his favorite chair calmly rocking back and forth as he joins the pieces with thread slowly bringing a new jacket into existence. He really likes this chair. He'd never sat in one before that week, a rocking chair he's pretty sure it's called, and it was quick to become his favorite in the shop. It was fun and relaxing, what more could you ask for?

He worked diligently on the jacket and after a few hours of work he's placing the familiar jacket on a mannequin. The finished product was a near identical copy of the one he gave Fundy on his tenth birthday. In Tommy's defense, Fundy really liked that jacket and he didn't see why that wouldn't carry through to this world. Maybe he shouldn't have made it while neck deep in nostalgia, but it's too late to go back now. He'll never admit to it, but he longs for something familiar in this strange new place. Everyday he sees people he knows, people he's risked his life for and they for him, but each time he has to face the fact that they don't know him. They don't know about any of that and he hates how lonely it makes him feel. So if sewing his nephew's jacket is what makes him feel more at ease than so be it.

His eyes drift to the clock as he sweeps the last of the scraps into a pile and realizes he was there long past his usual hours. He didn't mind much. It's not like he had anything else to do. He tosses the scraps into the bin and smacks his hands together to get rid of the dust.

"See you tomorrow Clementine!"

“Goodbye Tommy,” she responds from behind the till and he leaves with a wave.

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“Report.” The man flicks the poker chip into the air with his thumb and catches it as it comes hurdling back down. Over and over he flips and catches the poker chip waiting for his subordinate to speak. Each movement only served to further unsettle the other, nerves rising with each throw.

“I ran into him by accident,” Fundy finally says, eyes avoiding those of his boss. “He works at Clem’s Couturier.”

“Go on,” the man snarls after the younger falls silent for a moment too long.

“He stayed a while after closing and I followed him back to an apartment in Lower L’Manburg,” Fundy continued, having finally found the words. “From what I can tell he lives alone. I left after finding out which apartment was his.”

“Good. You’re dismissed.” Fundy hesitates. “Is there something you need?”

“Why-” Fundy stops. Does he really want to do this? He wants to know, but he doesn’t know if it’s worth it. What if the price for the information is too high? His curiosity won out. What more was there to lose. “Why are you so interested in him? He’s just some kid that wandered into Las Nevadas.”

“He intrigues me.” Fundy lets out a quiet sigh of relief. Asking Jester a question is often like signing a deal with the devil. He’s met people who’ve given an arm and a leg for information from Jester, literally. He’s getting off easy this time.

The man grabs the open manila folder on his desk, slouching back in his seat as he looks over the information he no doubt has memorized by this point. “His file is practically empty with nowhere near even the minimum of information required for a government file. A name, an age, and an address. There’s nothing on his power, his family, schooling. There’s so much missing I have half a mind to think the file is forged. It’s like he doesn’t exist and that means there’s a *mystery*.”

A mystery. That doesn’t bode well for anyone involved. Jester will use any means necessary to satisfy his curiosity and the man’s newest victim doesn’t sit well with the hybrid. Tommy seemed like a nice kid and he didn’t like spying on him, but it wasn’t like he had much of a choice.

Jester tosses the now shut folder onto his desk and swings in his chair to face Fundy. “I want you to make friends with him. You have an easy in now. When you go back, start a conversation. Find out whatever you can. Any information is valuable. I don’t care if all you have is his favorite food. No matter what it is you tell me. Got it?” Fundy nods. “Good, now get the fuck out of my office.”

Fundy practically runs from the office while doing his best to hide it, but Jester only smirks as he does so. Jester grabs the glass of whiskey off his desk and leans back in his chair and

takes a sip.

He is going to find out *everything* about Tommy and nothing is going to get in his way. His curiosity has gotten the best of him many times in the past, but none of that was as alluring a mystery as this. With each step he took and every question he answered ten more popped up. Tommy was a maze of mysteries and Jester was going to get to the center at any cost.

“You can’t hide for long, *Theseus Minecraft*.”

## Chapter End Notes

Our first pov from a character other than Tommy! There's going to be more as the story goes on, but for now, it's mainly going to be Wilbur and Tommy I'm pretty sure.

Minor edits made: 10/7/23

# Chapter Four

## Chapter Summary

Tommy meets someone new and we get some more of Wilbur's point of view. And is that trouble I see?

## Chapter Notes

I'm sorry this chapter's a few days late the next chapter should (hopefully) come out on Wednesday like usual.

TWs:

violence, death, blood/gore, dehumanization, and body horror?

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The sun was just beginning to set when Tommy made his way to the roof and he watched as the sky exploded in warm color painting the sky in pink and red and orange. He loved how calm it was on the roof. Occasionally he'd see a vigilante run by but they never paid him any mind. Too busy focusing on the next villain to take down to care about some random guy chilling on a roof.

Once in a while Aries or Enderwalk would check in on him from afar, but not as much as they used to. Hopefully, he's not on their radar anymore. As a victim or a suspect. The oddest vigilante he's seen thus far had large round goggles with white lenses and swirls and was absolutely covered in wacky colors and designs with the swirl being pretty constant. He's pretty sure the guy can't even see out the goggles. His theory was only proven right by their first 'meeting'. When he first noticed Tommy he seemed surprised then fell right on his face which of course made Tommy laugh because why wouldn't he laugh at some dumbass face planting. The vigilante then proceeded to stare at him for a good five minutes before something in the other direction caught his attention and he jumped across the roofs in the opposite direction. Awkward and weird as fuck, but he didn't care enough to look into it. The guy probably just got hit in the head one too many times. He settles down on the edge, back pressed against the giant metal box that was always there. He has no idea what it's for, but on the warmer nights it's cool and when it's cold out the box was warm so he decided it's the perfect backrest.

Many of his nights were spent on the roof. It can get boring staying cooped up in the same room night after night and there's no real point in sleeping so the roof is his next best option without leaving his apartment building. Especially since Las Nevadas is apparently off limits.

Tommy mentally flips off Quackity, sorry *Jester*, and settles back against the metal box with his arms crossed behind his head. Wind blows against his face tossing his hair into his eyes and he revels in the feeling of being high off the ground. It's freeing in a way. Being up in the air with the wind in your face. Tommy's always loved being high up. That's where all the best views were and from up here he could see L'Manburg all around him. Beautiful L'Manburg.

It was different in this world. There weren't many trees, none of them in Lower L'Manburg, and each building seemed to be covered in a thin layer of grime, but it's L'Manburg and L'Manburg is his home.

The ambient sounds of the city surround him lulling him into the calm of the night and he feels himself relax further into the roof. Sirens echo through the streets as police cars chase whatever criminal was unlucky enough to fall on their radar this time. The wind blows through buildings and tunnels, whistling its way along its path, bringing a smile to Tommy's face.

Now this is something he loves. Being high up made something deep inside his soul loosen and it was one of the few places he could feel himself truly relax. Just the thought of wings taking him high into the sky was enough to make him smile. He'd fly so high he'd touch the stars and land on the moon itself. Wings so powerful he wouldn't have to think. He would just fly and he'd be wherever he wants with a single powerful beat. It's too bad that it would never be anything more than a fantasy.

He may not be able to fly, but he can still feel like he is. He can stand on his toes and lean over the edge and imagine wings stretching out behind him ready to take flight. It's become common practice whenever he's high up. Now though, he's content to lay with his eyes closed and imagine.

"It's not safe to sleep on the roof." Tommy startles at the sudden noise, eyes flying open as he bolts upright. Vigilante's usually leave him alone and most civilians are too scared to go up this high so who in their right mind decided to bother him? What the fuck is Siren doing in Lower L'Manburg?

"What the fuck," he mutters and glares at the hero. His eyes were glowing green, bright enough to hide his face, and Tommy notices scales on the other's hands. Phantom hybrid. Makes sense why he didn't hear him coming. Phantom hybrids are pretty well known for being light on their feet.

Siren was one of the heroes Tommy's researched since arriving, but there wasn't too much about him. He works mainly at night and tends to stay out of the public eye when not in press conferences and the like. Seeing him in person for the first time all Tommy could focus on was the coat. It was Wilbur's coat. Not exactly, it lacked the very obvious burns and tears and stitched on L'Manburg flag over his head, but at first glance Tommy was sure it was his. Tommy knows it isn't Wilbur, he met him earlier and he's pretty sure he wasn't hiding glowing eyes, but he did have to take a second to be sure of himself.

"Are you alright?" the hero asks and Tommy realizes the hero was reaching his hand towards him. Tommy jerks back and Siren takes a few steps away, hands held up like he was calming

a scared animal. “Hey, it’s okay. I’m sorry for startling you.”

“Fuck off, you didn’t startle shit,” Tommy spits, glaring at the hero.

“Okay,” Siren says placatingly. “I didn’t startle you.” Tommy rolls his eyes and falls back into his usual seat keeping the hero in the corner of his eyes. “Do you have somewhere to go?”

“Course I do dickhead,” Tommy retorts with no real feeling behind it. He doesn’t want to deal with some nosy asshole right now.

“You shouldn’t be sleeping on a roof.”

“I wasn’t sleeping. I was *relaxing*. I’ll go inside when I damn well please.” For some reason the hero took that as an invitation to join him and sat himself on the edge a few feet away from Tommy. “The fuck do you want?”

“To look at the view.”

“Fucker,” Tommy mutters under his breath, but does his best to ignore the man beside him. With the way he was facing he could just barely see the Hero Tower in the background standing tall and bright in the sky. It was far away and the light was muddled with the distance but it was obvious what it was. The Hero Tower is the tallest building in the Esempii and is visible from all over. Something about showing the power of heroes and their ability to save or some bullshit like that. The article he read about it was heavily biased and he didn’t feel like reading between the bullshit to find the facts so he ditched it for something else to read.

“The fuck are you doing here anyway?”

“I saw you on the roof and thought you might have been hurt so-”

“We already talked about that. I’m asking what you’re doing *here* as in why are you in Lower L’Manburg. I thought you hero fucks refused to leave those rich pricks in the upper districts unprotected or some shit like that.” Siren doesn’t respond for a long while, mouth gaping as he searches for an answer. “Let me guess, a vigilante that’s actually helping has started getting on the Tower’s nerves? Or a villian that’s seen around here is threatening the rich fucks?” Siren still doesn’t not answer. “Why am I not surprised,” Tommy sighs. He learned early on never to rely on others. People won’t help you unless it benefits them so why the hell would ‘heroes’ be any different.

Tommy doesn’t see the point in sticking around any longer and stands. “Good night Siren.” Tommy walks to the edge of the roof sandwiched by buildings and climbs onto the fire escape. “Enjoy your patrol or whatever.”

Heroes are such a shit concept.

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“Is this Fundy?”

*“Who is this?”*

“This is Tommy from Clem’s Couturier. Your jacket is ready to be picked up at your earliest convenience.

*“Oh, thank you. I’ll be there soon.”* Is Fundy afraid of him? He only got nervous after he told him his name. What is he doing to make Fundy so uncomfortable and how can he fix it?

Fundy hung up as soon as the words had left his mouth and Tommy was left listening to the dial tone. He busied himself tidying up, which ended up being a pretty shit distraction, while he waited for Fundy and about an hour later the door opened as the fox hybrid finally arrived.

“Fundy! Here’s your jacket. I hope you like it.” Tommy pushes the folded garment across the counter, equal parts eager and nervous to see Fundy’s reaction, and Fundy accepts it with a weary smile. His smile turns into an excited grin as he lifts it up and get’s a good look at the design.

“This is awesome, man!” All nervousness was gone from both people and was replaced with excitement as Fundy tried on the new jacket. “This is sick!” He turns back and forth and looks at himself in the mirror with a grin and Tommy can’t help but match it. Fundy wasn’t all nervous around him anymore! He probably just needed some time to warm up to him.

“I’m glad you like it.”

“It’s great.” Fundy digs through his pockets and produces a handful of primes. He places them on the counter and Tommy counts out the price before giving back his change. Fundy hesitates. “How long have you been working here?” The nervousness is back, but at least it’s not as bad as before. Tommy doesn’t let it diminish his good mood. He’s talking with his nephew! He didn’t leave right away! Well, technically, not his nephew, but still! Maybe they’ll get to be friends!

“Not long, should be about two weeks now I think,” Tommy responds with a shrug. A little more than that maybe, a day or two at most.

“That makes sense. I was wondering why I haven’t seen you before.”

“Yeah, haven’t been here too long.”

“How are you liking it so far?”

“It’s great. Best job I’ve ever had,” Tommy laughs. “Technically it’s the first job I’ve ever had since the others don’t really count, but still the best.”

“Others?” Fundy seems nervous, almost afraid even, to ask the question.

“Nothing big, just some odd jobs here and there.” He shrugs. Fundy relaxes a bit again, but still seems tense. Is he doing something wrong? Should he ask? No, probably not.

“That’s nice,” Fundy says, the atmosphere becoming awkward. Tommy, against his better judgment, opens his mouth to ask if everything’s alright, but is cut off before he can get a



word out. "I should probably get going."

"Oh. Alright." Tommy doesn't want him to leave yet, but he has to remember that this isn't the same Fundy he grew up with. Tommy's practically a stranger to this Fundy and he can't keep pushing the memories of his nephew onto him. He can't forget they are different people. They aren't the same.

"I'll be sure to come back soon." Fundy waves before leaving the shop, glancing at him wearily once more through the window as he walks away. Tommy spends the next few hours before lunch continuously running through his conversation with Fundy trying to find out where he went wrong, but couldn't think of anything. How is he supposed to fix things between them if he can't figure out where he went wrong? What is making Fundy so nervous around him?

"Tommy, your lunch break started ten minutes ago, dear. Shouldn't you be eating by now?"

"Oh shit, really? I'll head out now." He sets aside the shirt he was fixing and makes sure to place the needle in the cloth so it's easily visible and he won't have to struggle through trying to find it again when he gets back.

"Stay an extra ten minutes since you got a late start, alright?"

"Are you sure?"

"Very dear. Now go eat with your friend. Niki, right?"

"Yeah, thanks Clem."

"Shoo! Go eat!" Tommy laughs and jogs out the door with a wave. He can hear her laughter echo behind him as he slows his pace and calmly walks the rest of the way to Niki's. He's thinking a scone for today.

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"Hey Niki," Wilbur greets his friend and she smiles at him.

"Wilbur." She smiles. "You want your usual?"

"Please." Wilbur waits with his hands in his pockets as Niki makes his coffee and notices the lack of a certain blonde. "Will, um, will Tommy be here today?"

She places his cup on the counter and he wordlessly hands over the primes. "Usually he's here by now," she hums. "Fifteen minutes before now maybe."

Something gnaws at the back of Wilbur's mind, but he pushes it away. Tommy's fine, he said so himself. He was just enjoying the breeze and Wilbur watched him leave. He didn't fall asleep on a roof. He went home. Everything is perfectly fine. He's just running late for some reason. He has a job right? Yeah, that's why. He just got held back at work.

Wilbur ignores the little voice in his head telling him Tommy froze to death on a roof despite the temperatures at night not dropping low enough for that to happen.

“You’re worried.”

“I’m never worried.” It’s pointless to lie to Niki about stuff like this, but he tries anyway because he’s stubborn and doesn’t give up even when he might as well be running at a brick wall over and over expecting it to break.

“Liar.”

“Okay fine, yeah, I’m worried.”

“It’s not like you to get attached so easily. You’ve only met him once.” Niki crosses her arms and rests them on the counter as she talks.

“Twice,” Wilbur corrects without fully realizing it.

“Twice? When was the second time?”

“Met him last night as Siren,” Wilbur explains.

“Is he alright?” Niki asks shifting from calm to worried in the second it took Wilbur to blink.

“He’s alright. I found him sleeping on a roof and wanted to make sure he was alright and had somewhere to go.”

“Does he?”

“He said he did and he left down the fire escape so he probably lives nearby, if not in the building I found him on. Turns out he likes relaxing on the roof for some reason.” Niki nods and a question pops into Wilbur’s mind. “You don’t happen to know anything about his home life, do you?”

“Not a thing,” Niki responds with a sigh. “He’s not big on talking about himself.”

“Damnit.”

“You never did answer my question.”

“Hm? Oh, uh, I don’t know. We sorta just, clicked? I don’t know it just feels like I’ve always kinda known him. You know what I mean?”

“I get what you mean,” Niki agrees. “He’s familiar somehow. I feel like I know him, but can’t place why. I know I’ve never met him before, but I can’t shake it. It’s not strong, but it’s there.”

“Tell me about it.”

The bell over the door rings and Wilbur's doesn't pay it much mind until he hears the voice of the person they just so happen to be talking about.

"Wilbitch, Niki, how are you this fine morning?" Tommy greets. Wilbur sighs in relief, his anxiety melting away as Tommy walks in whole and unharmed.

"Hey Tommy, what's on the menu today?"

"A scone would you please. Clementine's been raving about them for *ages* and I've never tried them! Gotta see if they can live up to the talk."

"Well, I hope they meet your expectations," Niki chuckles and gathers his order together.

"Thanks Niki." Tommy happily takes his food and drink and places a handful of primes in the tip jar. Wilbur doesn't really listen to their conversation and instead looks closely at the teen before him. There was a large, white streak in his blonde hair and looked like it could have been gold once upon a time, but it was clearly poorly taken care of, tangled and messy and bronzy in color. The bags under his eyes were dark, darker than he thought possible, and that's saying something coming from someone who's perpetually sleep deprived and working the night shift. What's worse is that they're definitely darker today than they were yesterday. Tommy, same as yesterday, is wearing a white shirt with red sleeves and a black undershirt with long sleeves and a turtle neck.

Wilbur hated to admit that he was worried about the kid. Sure, he only met him yesterday, but he couldn't help but feel there was something off about him. It's a feeling he's used to in the hero world, usually getting it before a sneak attack or when rescuing hostages, but this time it was Tommy. He's hoping he's making a big deal out of nothing and he's worrying for no reason, but he hasn't survived this long as a hero by ignoring his hunches.

"Hey gremlin," Wilbur says as Tommy gets ready to disappear to his table.

"Bitch." Tommy takes a sip of his drink without breaking eye contact, poorly hiding his smirk behind his cup.

"I can't believe this is how you treat me," Wilbur whines dramatically. "How could you?"

"Cause I can, bitch," Tommy chuckles and takes a large bite from the scone. He was scowling at first but the second he took the bite he was smiling. It was hilarious watching him trying not to show how much he liked the pastry when he was pretending to be mad.

"Child."

"I'm not a fucking child, you bastard! You're a wrong'un you know that! A bitch, if you will." Wilbur laughs at Tommy's outburst who, like the child he is, sticks his tongue out at Wilbur in revenge before stomping over to his seat. Wilbur gives Niki a quick wave before following Tommy and sliding into the empty side of the booth.

Wilbur proceeds to spend the next hour annoying Tommy as much as possible before he has to leave for work. When he did, Tommy was smiling and that's a win in his books. He wasted

time before his patrol shopping around and buying, and eating, more sweets than he probably should have before a fight. No regrets! Even if he does end up puking from jumping around on a full stomach.

With a quick stop at the hero tower to change his suit he was ready to go.

Patrol, as usual, was calm at first. A few muggers apprehended here, a thief there. Nothing special. Then at around midnight he heard sirens and changed course for the bank. He lands outside and crouches as he peaks into the building, taking care not to make any more noise than necessary. Stealth is his speciality after all.

The bank was one of these 24-hour ones so the lights were on and there were hostages inside. It was only converted into a 24-hour bank after Las Nevadas showed up a few years earlier and people started needing cash more. The few hostages that were inside were on the floor pressed against the walls while five people with guns milled about.

Two were by the entrance of the bank, two were standing over the hostages turned away from the door and the last one was threatening the tellers. The door was wide open and halfway off its hinges and one of the windows had been smashed. Supposedly, they were bulletproof, but considering there's a bullet mixed in with the broken glass he seriously doubts that. Downside, stepping on the glass could give him away. But on the other hand, getting in will be a lot easier. Not to mention there's nothing stopping them from hearing him.

Siren smirks and slinks closer to the open window. He hovers just out of view as the two guards watch for cars or heroes. They seemed attentive and didn't look too long in one direction, effectively covering every angle of attack and yet their movements seemed robotic, like they weren't actually watching and were moving on muscle memory alone. Siren might as well be invisible to them where he stands only a few feet away.

*"Stand here and do not move or speak. When the police arrive you will allow yourselves to be arrested."* The two robbers show no obvious changes in demeanor besides a slight stiffening of their shoulders when Siren first begins to speak. No one else around was affected by his words and Wilbur sneaks into the building.

He moves silently through the building, his movements almost dancelike as he weaves his way through broken glass and rubble. He leans around a pillar and catches sight of the two guarding the hostages. The one up front was still by the tellers as they gathered money from the vault. Siren snuck behind the nearest guard and held up a finger, pressing it to his lips to keep the hostages quiet when they spotted him. Their relief was obvious, but the thief, thankfully, didn't seem to notice.

The man didn't react as Siren crept up behind him and just as he seemed to realize something was wrong Siren struck. His fist slammed into the man's face and he stumbled backward, not bothering to cover his bleeding nose. Siren knocks the gun from his hands and it falls to the floor as he struggles to recover. Siren pushes it away and it skitters across the ground to a nearby hostage who grabs it and gets in front of the others, holding the weapon steady in their hands.

Siren leaps forward at the same time the man lunges. He twists and the man stumbles past him. Siren restrains the man from behind and pulls him back before whispering in his ear, *“Sit in the corner until the police arrive. Allow yourself to be arrested.”* The man’s eyes go blank and he walks to the corner mindlessly. The final two had noticed him by then and he didn’t hesitate to jump back into the fight.

Siren and the man guarding the rest of the hostages meet in the middle and immediately Siren had to duck out of the way of a punch.

The man lunges and throws another punch and once again Siren dodges. Each time Siren dodged his movements got slower and slower, but the man never once slowed. Siren’s exhaustion creeps up on him as he falters in his step and the man’s fist lands in his stomach. Siren crashes into the wall behind him and barely stops himself from crumpling to the floor.

The man’s face was unusually blank, not even a self-satisfied smirk as he marches forward. Siren ducks again, but instead of keeping his distance like he had before he runs forward. The man’s limbs jerk as he tries to correct his swing, but Siren has the element of surprise and slams into him. They fall to the ground and Siren is quick to put an end to the fight.

*“Stand down,”* he hisses and the man goes still. Siren huffs and eases his hold on the man. *“Join your friend in the corner.”* Siren gets off and the man stands up. His movements are jerky and he collapses into the corner by the first guard doing nothing to protect his head on the way down. His eyes are blank and lifeless and if he didn’t know any better Siren would have thought he were dead. Sure he’s used to the blank looks from people under his control, but this was a whole new level.

Siren pushes aside his confusion and focuses back on the fight. The final thief, the leader from what he can tell, was scowling. She was stationed in front of the tellers with full duffle bags of cash around her feet and she held a knife to a hostage’s throat. A kid, no older than twelve, was held in her grasp frozen unnaturally still and a woman on the ground nearby was sobbing.

*“Useless! You’re all fucking useless!”* she screams at her companions. *“Useless fucks!”*

*“My baby! Please, not my baby!”*

*“Will you shut the fuck up!”* she yells at the hostage’s mother and harshly kicks her away. The woman whimpers and is pulled away by the others as she does her best to muffle her cries. *“You, you move one fucking step and I’ll slit this brat’s throat.”* The mother’s cries reach a crescendo despite the villain’s threat, something she hurries to cover with her hand, and silent tears pour down the kid’s eerily still face. The villain’s red eyes gleam in the light as she glares at the mother. *“If you don’t shut up I’ll just kill the both of you!”*

Fuck, okay, he can do this. Siren looks between the screaming villain and statuesque child in her arms and the sobbing mother. The villain presses the knife deeper into the child’s neck, a bead of blood dripping down his neck, and Siren’s mind is made up for him.

*“Freeze!”*

Immediately everything goes still. The villain, the hostages, even the fly buzzing in the corner falls to the ground, frozen in motion. Siren hated when he had to do this. It's the easiest way to solve most situations, but it also means the hostages are affected by his power. Being able to make people do whatever he wants is very useful when you can control who it affects. Unfortunately for Siren he can't limit it to certain people. If you hear his voice you do as he says. It's as simple as that.

If he speaks too loud when dealing with situations like this it can put hostages in danger. The unfortunate incidents from the beginning of his hero careers were a testament to that. It's better to just whisper directly to the person he's trying to control.

With the immediate danger out of way Siren finally lets out a deep breath and walks up to the villain. "*Release him.*" The villain does as she's told and the child falls to the floor, no longer a doll in the villain's arms, and sobs. The boy's mother is the next to be freed from Siren's control and she wastes no time rushing over to him. She gathers her son into her arms and sobs with him. She mutters quietly between her cries, but the words were too quiet for Siren to make out.

He leaves the mother and son to their teary reunion and makes his way around the room freeing the rest of the hostages stuck under his command. The police arrive with blaring blue and red sirens as he's freeing the last of the hostages.

The four thieves allow themselves to be cuffed and climb into the cars without a fight. Even after his power's effects have worn off they don't react. They sit solemn and still as they're taken away.

Siren approaches the villain and snaps the power restricting cuffs around her wrists. He mutters a quick, "*Release,*" and she drops into an unsteady stance, off balance from the sudden change. Only a second passes before she's bucking against his grip and trying to throw him away.

"You're going to regret this!" Siren hands her over to the nearest officer who accepts her with a nod in his direction. Two more officers are needed to drag her out of the building. "Mark my words *Siren!* You won't get away with this! We will take everything you care about! You hear me! We're coming for what you care about mo-!" Her voice is cut off as the door slams, but he can see her continuing to scream through the window. Siren groans and rubs circles on his temple.

"Gods, my head is killing me," Wilbur mutters.

"Will you be continuing your patrol Siren?"

"Not tonight," Siren responds.

The officer nods, "Rest well sir."

"You as well." The officer nods once more before getting in their car and driving away. As Siren returns to the Hero Tower to change and head home he can't seem to get his mind off the robbery. There was something off about the whole thing. It was unusually easy. The only

one who used their power, from what he can tell, was the leader and the others seemed like empty shells with their blank faces and at times sluggish movements.

The leader's eyes had glowed red when she was holding the child hostage, an uncommon but not unheard of eye color but still noteworthy. The other four had bloodshot eyes and seemed pale in a sickly sort of way. He could assume that all four of them were powerless and that the four were related, but the odds of four siblings being powerless and none of them looking alike were slim. Another possibility is them coming together as a group because of their lack of powers, but that doesn't explain why they would work with someone with powers. Protection maybe? No, that's not it.

Siren groans as his head aches just a little bit more at the torrent of mental questions. "I'm too tired to think about this right now," he whines. He decides to push his thoughts to the side for the time being and focus on getting home. It's probably not even that big of a deal anyway. So some guys panicked and didn't think to use their powers. He doesn't have to think so hard about it. Yeah, it's nothing worth worrying about.

Siren ignores how the thieves, bar the leader, were calm and collected until the very end. Not once did they show nervousness or anger or even pride at getting a hit in. Instead, he changes into his pajamas and collapses on his bed at the tower instead of going home for the night, content to sleep away his headache without the thought of strange thieves invading his mind.

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As time continues to pass Wilbur becomes a dependable part of Tommy's routine. Tommy will admit he's not upset about it. Everyday he gets to go to Niki's for lunch and have a chat with someone who looks and sounds exactly like his brother, minus the whole unhinged 'let's blow up the country' talk. It's almost like being back with Wilbur in L'Manburg's early days when the threat of war was miniscule compared to what it would be.

Each day Wilbur shows up with a smile and a joke and Tommy basks in the familiarity of it all. It makes him realize how much he actually misses the Smp. He didn't think he'd miss it much, or at all, but it's the little things that his mind keeps coming back to and thinking about fondly. It was people mostly and Wilbur seemed to be a bridge between the two. All the best parts of his brother that Tommy loved and followed right up to the end and would still be following to this day if he hadn't left. It was nice being able to be with him again even if he has to constantly remind himself that they're different people and they aren't actually brothers here.

He's not in denial, you are.

Tommy smiles as he walks to Niki for yet another delicious lunch and walks in with his signature smile and shouts a greeting to the pink-haired cafe-owner.

"Niki! How are you doing today?"

Long used to his antics she only shakes her head and smiles softly at the teen. "Good as always Tommy. What would you like today?"

“Let’s see,” he peruses the menu for a moment before deciding what he wants. “How about a donut for today. Those are the little circles of dough, right?”

“You’re thinking about donut holes, those are just the centers. Donut’s are little rings of deep fried dough usually covered in icing,” she explains and gestures to a row on the bottom shelf.

“Fuck yeah, sign me up.” Tommy sends a quick glance at his hunger bar. It was starting to get a little low. “Three please.” Worst case scenario he’ll just store whatever he doesn’t eat in his inventory for later.

“Coming right up.” After a few moments Niki returns with three donuts and his daily cup of hot chocolate. “This one’s pumpkin spice, that one’s glazed, and the last one’s jelly. I made sure they’re still warm,” she whispers conspiratorially after pointing out each flavor.

“Thank you Niki!” he exclaims, drawing out the words as he speaks, making the woman laugh as he holds the donuts up like he’s offering them to the sky. “All hail the queen of sweets, Lady Niki Nihachu.”

“What in the world did I walk into?” Wilbur questions, a look of regret on his face.

“Niki gave me donut’s prick.” Tommy brings the sweets back down and practically hugs them to his chest. “They’re still warm,” he whispers with stars in his eyes.

“You’re a little sugar gremlin,” Wilbur laughs.

“I am not!”

“You definitely are,” Niki agrees and Tommy deflates and pouts, staring into his donuts forlornly.

“Seriously, I don’t think I’ve ever seen you eat real food,” Wilbur laughs.

Tommy’s eyes get comically wide and he stares at Wilbur like he just told him he was from the End. “This isn’t real food?” Sweets aren’t considered real food? What the fuck? How does it work to fill his hunger bar then? This doesn’t make sense!

Wilbur falters, “Uh, no, that’s not- like ‘real food’. As in food that’s healthy for you.” He makes some strange hand movement as he speaks like he’s trying to mime out what he means as he speaks.

“Oh.” That makes a lot more sense. “Like carrots?”

“Yeah, like carrots,” Wilbur agrees.

“What else is considered ‘real food’?” Tommy asks. He could feel his donuts cooling off through the paper container Niki put them in, but he’s too interested to pay much attention to it. He wants to know about this world’s food. Hopefully there are more options than what you can get from a crafting table. He hasn’t come across any of this during his nightly internet searches and he’s found some pretty odd things. Did you know a flamingo’s head has to be upside down when it eats? A month ago he didn’t even know the things existed! They’re



fucking weird. Anything with a neck that long is weird as fuck. He suppresses a shiver at the thought of a giraffe. At least flamingo's got the pink going for them, giraffes are just wrong. Alien looking mother fuckers.

"Salad, sandwiches, soup, ur, chicken I guess? Just anything that doesn't have enough sugar to give you a sugar rush," Wilbur shrugs.

"What's a sugar rush?"

"When you eat a lot of sugar and get really hyper."

"So like drugs?"

"What do *you* know about drugs?" Wilbur asks incredulously.

"Enough." What would happen if he started a drug ring here? Maybe starting a drug cartel isn't a good idea. It's not like he could find nether wart here anyway.

"I walk away for one minute," Niki laughs, returning with a tray of warm cookies that she places in the case. "How did you even get to this conversation?"

"We were talking about 'sugar rushes'," Tommy says. "And 'real food'. I want to try some."

"Okay, what would you like?" Niki points to the half of the menu labeled savory.

"How about a sand-witch," Tommy sounds out. "The one with the tur-kay on it." Turkey's the same thing as chicken, right?

"Sure thing." While Niki grabs the food Tommy shoves his donuts into Wilbur's hands.

"Hold this while I get my money." Tommy grabs his wallet from his inventory while Wilbur is busy trying not to drop the sweets. "Drop those and I'll kill you." Tommy grabs the primes and sets them on the counter, for the donuts and the sandwich, before sending his wallet back to his hotbar.

"A little warning would be nice," Wilbur says as Tommy grabs back the donuts.

"No." While he waits Tommy bites into the glazed donut and promptly devours it. It's still warm! He doesn't want to fill up his hunger bar before trying the sandwich so he, regrettably, sends his remaining donuts to his inventory when Wilbur isn't looking. They were still warm when he did so they'll stay that way until he decides to eat them. Prime, he loves stasis effects. Warm donuts on the roof sounds like a great way to spend the night.

"Here you go." Niki hands over the warm sandwich and Tommy presses the primes into her hands before she can move away. Her face drops before she sends him a playful glare and places the money in the register.

"Thanks Niki," Tommy cheers and waves. She waves back, an oddly fake looking smile on her face, before Wilbur starts up a conversation.

Tommy throws himself into his seat and unwraps the sandwich, giving it a poke to the side. The board said it was turkey and provolone which he's guessing is a type of cheese. The bread was warm and the cheese was all melty and all over the sides making his mouth water.

"Fuck it," he mutters and shoves it in his mouth. He tears off a good chunk and starts chewing. No wonder people eat 'real food' so often, he remembers Wilbur mentioning three meals a day at some point, this thing is delicious! It was a nice change from all the sweet things he's been eating. He's never tasted something like this before. Everything on the Smp, bar a few exceptions, was pretty tasteless. That's just how crafting table food was and there wasn't any time for anyone to learn how to cook. The only people he knew who could were Phil, Techno who made exclusively potato dishes, and Niki and Bad who were bakers who could throw together a decent stew if asked. A few people could throw together a shoddy burger and everyone knew how to toss a pork chop in a furnace, but that was about it. Afterall, there's no point in getting fancy with it when you're just going to choke it down during a fight anyway.

"How is it?" Wilbur asks as he falls into the booth across from Tommy with a cup in hand.

"It's fucking delicious," Tommy mumbles through a mouth full of food. He shoves another bite into his mouth despite it still being full and coughs.

"Careful, you'll choke." Wilbur reaches out and is about to grab Tommy's hands, but stops and they hover a few inches away for a second before he pulls them back. He tries to cover the mistake by drinking his coffee and Tommy, kindly, doesn't mention it. He's thankful for it really. As much as he misses hugs and arms around his shoulder, hell even someone ruffling his hair as much as he hates having it get all messed up, he hates being touched even more. Ever since he was revived in the prison being touched made him feel like his skin was on fire. He couldn't tell if it was a side effect of being revived or something completely different. Either way, he'd prefer no one get anywhere near him.

Tommy swallows the bit of cheesy, meat layered bread and rips off a piece from the unbitten side. He holds it over to Wilbur and shakes his hand at him when he stares at him in confusion instead of taking it.

"For me?"

"Yes dumbass, now eat it before I change my mind." Wilbur hesitantly takes the peace offering and Tommy turns back to his portion of the sandwich. It's really fucking good. Wilbur must agree because a minute later he's raving about how good it is and how Tommy is the greatest, biggest man ever for sharing it with him.

Okay, maybe he's exaggerating a little bit, but he really did like the sandwich.

His eyes catch the time and he shoves the rest of the sandwich into his mouth before standing and doing a quick stretch.

"Time to go already?" Wilbur asks, also standing from his seat, to-go coffee cup in his hand.

"Yeah, back to work," Tommy says with a smile.

“Wait a second, where did the donuts go?”

Tommy freezes for a second, how does one explain that they’ve put their uneaten food between the folds of reality to save for later, before clearing his throat. There is nothing to do in this situation other than take the most honest, logical approach. Lying. “I ate them.”

“Were they good?”

“Yes,” Tommy answers evenly while making direct eye contact and drawing out the word.

“Glad you liked them.”

“I will always like Niki’s baking,” Tommy responds with a nod. “Goodbye Wilbur.”

“Goodbye child.”

“I’m not a fucking child!” Wilbur laughs as he walks away and Tommy heads back to the shop, grumbling the whole way. When he arrives he can see Clementine’s name tag through the roof which means she’s probably in her apartment. She lives in the apartment above the shop so she’s up there a lot, even if she has a little trouble getting up and down the stairs sometimes.

He sits down in his favorite chair and pulls out a dress he was embroidering. As he sets up the string his eyes land on a picture. It was of Clementine and her son. Clementine was really young in the picture. Her hair was still blonde and didn’t have a single streak of gray in it. She was sitting in an ornate chair with the boy on her lap, thirteen from what Clementine told him, and he couldn’t help but think they looked similar. If it weren’t for the moth wings the boy shared with Clementine they could have been carbon copies.

It would have been fun to meet him, he’s sure they could have pulled some pretty great pranks, but Clementine’s son had died a few days after the picture was taken and that was decades ago. He wouldn’t ever get to meet him. At least not when he’s alive. He could probably get Kristen to help him find him after he’s died.

Tommy shakes his head and turns back to his embroidery, needle properly threaded. There’s no use in thinking about that now. He doesn’t need to worry about that for a long, long time. He’s got plenty of time.

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“Sir!”

“What is it?” the man hisses, turning away from his precious, his savior, and glares at the approaching pest.

“Stand Still has been captured along with four Cadavers!”

A long hiss streams from the man’s lips, his savior mirroring the anger with vines rising behind him. The pest takes a step back in fear and with a yell of outrage vines rip away from the walls and tear through the pest that dared to bring him such news. The pest’s labored

breathing reached the man's ears and he scowled as he stalked over and towered feet above its head.

"Who did this?" he hisses.

The bug chokes and blood gurgles from his lips and down his throat. "Siren," it chokes out with breathless words and bloody teeth. "Siren made the arrest." The nuisance's heart slowly gives out as the blood continues to pour from its wounds and pool on the ground. Nearby vines slithered across the ground and soaked up the liquid, growing in size.

The man hums and stands to his full height. "Siren," he repeats slowly. His mind flashes with images as the hivemind feeds the memories of the fight into his brain. A fight won by Siren against more useless pests. A pity, Stand Still could have been of great use to them.

"Bad?" The man turns his head in an unsettling way and meets the eyes of his friend dripping in red. He wore vines like expensive jewelry and there always seemed to be more being added on. The vines that were their savior, their life, their *existence*.

"Skeppy," the demon responds, voice raspy as he leans down to the shorter of the two.

"He would make a good Cadaver," Skeppy remarks as he looks at the dying man with a faraway look. The pest takes one final gasp for air before the light leaves his eyes and he's gone.

"We can always use more," Bad agrees and slowly the vines incase the corpse and tunnel into his wounds. His veins are pathways for the vines to create a new skeleton for the deceased. The injuries are sealed by wriggling red vines blending perfectly with the slick red blood dripping from every piece of mutilated flesh.

"All hail the Egg," Skeppy whispers like a prayer, one the Bad quickly echoes. Warmth rushes through him at the declaration and he soaks in the feeling. Another soul pledged to the Egg. Another life sacrificed to its beauty.

"All hail the Egg," the people hidden against the wall draped in vines chant in unison as the being pulses with power, feeding from its followers.

"All hail the Egg."

## Chapter End Notes

You can not escape me - giraffe

Completely unrelated but, are creepers all neck or no neck? This is a very important question.

# Chapter Five

## Chapter Summary

Puffy's leading a meeting in the Hero Tower and we get another Tommy and Jester interaction.

## Chapter Notes

Bit of a shorter chapter today (sorry about that) but we're back on schedule!

TWs:

death (pretty sure that's it for this one)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Are we ready to start the meeting?” As she speaks Puffy stands at the head of the table with a handful of papers in hand looking out at the table of her fellow heroes.

“Wait! I’m here!” A shaky hand appears through the door and starts laboriously pulling the sliding door open, the person’s tilted silhouette barely visible through the frosted glass of the meeting room window. Puffy only sighs and gestures for Foolish to deal with it. Foolish rises out of his seat and starts corralling the person back out the door and closes it behind them, muffled conversation barely being made out through the door. “Hey-!”

“We’ll wait for Foolish to come back to being,” Puffy says while rubbing her temples to stave off the already forming headache. That dumbass is going to be the death of her. “Honestly, you’d think he would know to stay in bed after getting his skull cracked.” Phil shares a look of sympathy, a knowing look in his eyes, one Puffy returns with a look saying ‘what are you going to do?’ as Foolish returns, the door clicking shut and locking behind him.

“He slipped out when Ponk fell asleep,” Foolish informs as he takes his seat. “Again.”

“Of course he did,” Puffy mutters. “Let’s just begin, shall we?” The projector whirls as the screen lights up. “First order of business.” She clicks the remote in her hand and pictures of five different criminals in handcuffs are shown. “Last week Siren apprehended this criminal group led by the villain Stand Still. As of this morning four of the five were found dead in their cells.” She clicks the button again and the screen switches to a picture of four men lying dead in their cells. Each corpse was covered in blood more black than red with it being more concentrated around their eyes, nose, mouth, and ears than anywhere else. There was also more blood around the bodies than the human body could logically hold.

Around the room are gasps, harsh breaths sucked through clenched teeth, at the sight.

“They were fine when I arrested them,” Wilbur says, visibly unsettled by the sight, staring at the screen with wide eyes. “I swear they were.”

“There was nothing wrong with them when they were arrested,” Puffy assures him. “They were acting odd, but there was nothing that would hint at something like this.” Puffy puts down the remote and turns full bodied to the assembly of heroes, hands braced on the table. “A few hours after they were arrested the guards heard screaming and when they went to investigate this is what they found.” She gestures at the photos redundantly. She allows a moment for everyone to take in the information before continuing.

“The leader, known as Stand Still for her ability to freeze people in place through touch, was also found in a,” she pauses to contemplate her words, “less than ideal situation.”

“Less than ideal?” Quackity repeats. “Being in prison is on its own a ‘less than ideal situation’.”

Puffy presses the button on the remote once more and the pictures on the screen switch to ones of another cell. There was no one in the pictures, but it clearly showed signs of past occupance through the state of the walls. Words were scratched into the surface of the cement, dried blood crusting over each one, the same phrase repeated over and over.

“The guards claim that around the same time the others were found dead, her scream being what drew their attention, she was found in her cell repeating the phrase, ‘I have to go back.’ She’s written on the walls using a mix of scratching the words into the cement and writing in her own blood. The words ‘All hail’ along with two others that were hidden in each sequence. They were scratched out too thoroughly to be legible. When checking on her again this morning she was found to be catatonic and sent somewhere better suited to care for her.”

Techno is the first to break the silence. “Something big is happening.”

Puffy nods in agreement. “There is no reasoning that we can think of behind what’s happened here, but I can’t help but agree. Four spontaneous deaths alone would be a cause enough for concern. There is something big happening and I doubt it’s something that started recently. I only hope we’re prepared when it comes for us.” The air in the room is somber and tense at this point and Puffy clicks off the projector. “This meeting is adjourned until further notice.” There heroes slowly file out of the room, muttering to each other their theories and thoughts, and Puffy is left in the room alone with one other person. “Don’t you have to get back to the cafe?”

“The cage can survive without me for a little longer,” Niki responds and sits in the chair closest to where Puffy’s standing. She pats the edge of the table and with a sigh Puffy drags the chair from the other side to the end and sinks into it, head falling into her hands with her elbows braced on the table.

“There’s something more to this Niki,” Puffy whispers. “I know there is. It’s giving me the worst feeling, but I don’t know where to start to fix it.”

Niki's hand rubs comforting circles on the other's back and the sheep hybrid leans closer to her closest friend. "You're stretching yourself too thin Puffs. You're already dealing with so much and now there's some big mystery on top of it. At this rate you'll be throwing yourself into my shoes by the end of the month." Puffy laughs, worries easing slightly at the woman's joke, and Niki smiles. "There's no use worrying about this right now. Focus on the stuff you can fix right now and worry about that later when you actually know what you're worrying about."

"I know," Puffy responds with a sigh. "I just...there's *something wrong*." She could feel it in her bones. There's something happening and for the first time since she's become a hero she doesn't have a single clue on how to fix it.

"Then there's something wrong. You are the Captain, the greatest hero the Hero Tower has seen in decades, in Hero Tower's history if you ask me. If there's anyone in the world who can fix it, it's you. I know you can do it, but you have to find out more before you can fix anything. There's nothing to fix if you don't find out the problem."

Puffy smiles weakly at Niki, wild brown and white hair nearly blocking her vision of the woman. "Thanks Niki."

"Anytime," Niki responds.

"And don't be selling yourself short. You're just as good a hero as I am," Puffy scolds lightheartedly, her shoulder bumping into Niki's.

"Yeah," Niki replies, doubt heavy on her voice, a soft sad smile on her face. "Come on. You're coming with me to the cafe. You need a break and there's nothing a good pastry can't fix."

"Sounds perfect," Puffy laughs. "Oh! I can meet that kid you were telling me about, right? Tommy, was it?"

"Yup! I'm sure he'll love you."

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What the fuck is his therapist doing here? When Tommy walks in to get his daily pastry and hot chocolate he did not expect to see Puffy sitting by the counter laughing with Niki. Don't get him wrong. He likes Puffy! She pretty fucking cool and it's great to see her, even the alternate universe version of her who's probably just as cool, it just wasn't what he was expecting to walk into when he went for lunch that day.

"Hey Niki," Tommy greets with a smile, only slightly more unsure than usual. If Puffy tries to therapize him he's leaving.

"Tommy! This is Puffy," Niki happily gestures towards the hybrid in front of her and Puffy gives a wave, a kind smile on her face. Puffy always has been a kind one. Scarily patient as well.

“Hey Big P, the name’s Tommy. You another friend of Niki’s?” His greeting is loud, obnoxious even as some would say, but her smile doesn’t waver in the slightest.

“You could say that,” Puffy jests, Niki shaking her head in fond exasperation. “So you’re the famous Tommy I’ve heard so much about.”

“Aww, Niki! You talk about me?” Tommy gasps, dramatically clasping his hands over his heart with wide, bright eyes glinting with a testing light.

Niki chuckles, “Of course I do. You’re my best customer after all.”

“Very right. I am the best, always. The biggest man ever.” Tommy bobs his head up and down as he speaks, drawing another laugh out of the woman.

“So, what’s today’s pastry of the day?”

Tommy hums as he scans the case for something new to try. “What’s a crêpe?”

“It’s a thin, sweet pancake usually rolled up with toppings,” Niki explains.

“With whipped cream?” Tommy asks with stars in his eyes.

“Yes, with whipped cream.”

“Yes! I want that please! Strawberries and whipped cream please.” Whipped cream! Tommy would kill a man for whipped cream. Probably Jack. Specifically Jack. Just for the hell of it. Then he’d go steal the world’s supply of whipped cream.

“Coming right up!”

Niki disappears into the back and the atmosphere becomes awkward as he’s left with Puffy, rocking back and forth on his heels and looking everywhere but at her. “So Tommy, do you live near here?”

He shrugs, “Sorta. I live in Lower L’Manburg.”

“That’s a pretty far walk to make every day just for lunch.”

“I work nearby so it’s not so bad. Wait, how do you know I come here every day?” He narrows his eyes in suspicion. “How do you know I’m here every day, hm? How do you know I walk, hm? You’re not a wrong’un, are you? Hm?”

“Niki told me.” Tommy drops the suspicion and nods.

“Niki could never be a wrong’un.”

Puffy chuckles, “Sure.”

“One strawberry whipped cream crêpe and hot chocolate.” Niki hands him the order and he sticks his hand in his pocket and draws the exact amount of primes needed. He found that by



taking the money out of his wallet before putting it in his inventory he can take out the exact amount without bothering with all the steps needed with his wallet! He really is a genius. He drops the money in the tip jar and Niki shakes her head with a sigh.

“It was nice meeting you, Captain Puffy. Now, if you’ll excuse me I must be getting to my whipped cream!” In his haste to get to his seat and devour his new treat he missed the twin looks of panic on the women’s faces.

“How does he know I’m the Captain?” The words don’t register to Tommy as he stuffs the crêpe in his mouth.

“Amazing as always Niki!” he shouts to her through a good-filled mouth with a thumbs up before digging into the rest of his meal, oblivious to the women’s plight.

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He is not stalling and whoever says otherwise is a liar and a wrong’un. He is taking the quickest path to Tubburger and definitely isn’t detouring through multiple different districts to get there. Nope, just a straight shot through Lower L’Manburg to Upper L’Manburg and Snowchester with no possible way of walking to Las Nevadas any quicker. This is one hundred percent the quickest way.

It’s really not.

Okay maybe he’s stalling a *little* bit.

Can you blame him! He hasn’t seen Tubbo in *forever* and even though this isn’t the same Tubbo he still wants to be friends with him again and nothing can convince him that he doesn’t work at Tubburger. The place is named Tubburger for fucks sake. It’s literally Tubbo’s name mixed with burger.

He finally reaches Las Nevadas and kinda just hovers near the entrance. Technically Tubburger is a little outside the border of Las Nevadas, but it’s run by Jester so people consider it part of it anyway.

He stood across the street from the burger place for what could have been hours or seconds or days, he didn’t know, but no matter how hard he tried he couldn’t bring himself to step even an inch in the restaurant’s direction.

“Tommy?” Tommy turns towards the sudden voice, prepared for a fight should it come to it, but instantly relaxes.

“Jester.”

“I knew I recognized that face!” Jester walks over with a smile and slings his arms around his shoulders. Tommy shirks away from the touch, but Jester’s arm was firm. The touch burned, but at the same time he never wanted the other to let go. “What are you doing standing out here all alone for so long?” Jester guides Tommy into Las Nevadas and Tommy goes along

with it. He'll see Tubbo later. He's not wimping out, he doesn't have a choice. He'll just have to wait another day.

Who's he kidding, he wasn't going to go in.

"Just thinking," Tommy answers in place of the truth.

"Penny for your thoughts?" Jester flicks a coin towards him and Tommy stumbles to catch it while Jester chuckles. He opens his hand and sees a metal poker chip staring up at him.

Tommy snorts, "Hate to break it to you big man, but this is a poker chip."

Jester shrugs, "What can I say, I've got quite a few of them. You never did answer my question though." The crowd scrambled out of the pair's way as they walk past, regarding the two with quick side eyes like they would be killed for getting caught looking.

Tommy was saved from answering as Jester suddenly stops and glares at a man standing in front of them. The man in question was laughing obnoxiously while people Tommy assumes to be his friends frantically pull at him to get him out of the way.

"Move." Jester's words cut through the laugh and the man turns towards the villain with a steely eye. Jester meets his eyes with a glare getting angrier by the second.

"How about you move," the man growls and turns back to his companions, each pale with fear.

Jester doesn't say a word, but slowly he raises his hand and all but the man back away in fear. Tommy can see the resignation in the eyes of the man's friends as they regard him as if he were already dead. From the way Jester is acting he thinks that may be true.

Jester's snap rings through the plaza and on both sides of the man ooze rises from the ground and takes hold of the man's arms. The ooze morphed into the rough shape of a green man. A man who's green. The ooze was more sludge than man and his name tag was warped enough that he couldn't read it.

The man seems to realize what's happening once the sludges arms wrap around him and it finally seems to hit him just how much trouble he's in, eyes widening in fear. "Wait, no!" He struggles against their hold and reaches out towards the people with him, but they only back away, hiding as best they can in plain sight as if to avoid sharing in his fate. "Help me! No!" The man is dragged away screaming, the sound slowly fading away leaving the plaza silent in terror, and Jester turns towards Tommy with a ruthless smile.

"Sorry about that," Jester apologizes. "Some people just have no respect." Tommy nods along with his words. It's not like he can get mad at him for killing someone, which there is no doubt in his mind is what's going to happen to the man, when he killed someone two weeks ago. Tommy Innit is many things, but hypocrite is not one of them. Most of the time at least.

They walk through the clear pass of terrified people, the man's friends crying quietly off to the side, and finally arrive at the villain's tower. As they walk through the halls he catches a glimpse of orange ducking around a corner, but when he tries to see what it is there's nothing to be seen.

Once in the office, Tommy reluctantly taking the elevator at Jester's behest and hating it the entire way, he takes his seat across from Jester without complaint even as the arm leaves his shoulder and he wants nothing more than to grab onto it and never let go.

"So what brings you to Las Nevadas?" Jester asks, elbows leaning against the table with interlaced hands.

"Technically, you," Tommy snarks. "You're the one who brought me here."

Jester grins, his wings fluffing up behind him, "You have me there. Perhaps I should reword the question."

"Perhaps you should." Tommy stays slumped in his chair as Jester stares into his soul from across the desk.

"You are quite bold for a civilian."

"It's easy when I know I'm not in danger."

"Not in danger?" Jester's voice took on a menacing lilt, something threatening lurking in his words.

"I know you won't kill me."

"Oh?" Jester leans farther forward, intrigued, but not quite losing the underlying threat. "And why's that?"

"I interest you." Tommy can see the shock flit through Jester's eyes at his words. "I'm a mystery for you to solve. The fun has barely begun, so why would you let it end so early on?"

Jester is silent for a long while, but Tommy can see the seed of respect has taken hold in the other's eyes. It wasn't much, but it was there and he nearly patted himself on the back right then and there. "I'll admit, you are not what I expected. Most are frightened by the thought of drawing my interest."

"Course I'm not bitch! I'm unexpected!"

"That you are," the man chuckles amusedly and grins. His smiles always seemed menacing even when they weren't meant to be. Even his laugh sounded menacing. "Tell me about yourself."

"Why should I?"

"As you said, I'm curious. Humor me for a while."

Tommy rolls his eyes. "And what do I get out of it? I know how you work. You trade info. Nothing is free in Las Nevadas and that goes both ways." He is so fucking glad he did his research on this guy. He's pretty different from the Quackity he knew on the Smp. Maybe it's because they had a pre-established friendship before he went all murderous and evilly and he really is the same and he just didn't realize it.

The respect grows ever so slightly and Tommy can't help but be proud. Things couldn't be going any better. "How about this, for every question I ask, you can ask one back. Sound like a deal?"

"I don't have to answer questions I don't want to and vice versa. Unanswered questions don't count. And no lying. Just skip the question if you're going to lie."

"Deal." Jester smirks. "First question, what's your favorite color?"

"Seriously?" Normally, Tommy would protest the villain getting to go first, but he's too bewildered by his question choice to care.

He shrugs, smirk not dropping in the slightest, "I'm starting out easy."

"Red," Tommy answers. "Same question."

"Navy."

"Look at me, I'm Jester and I can't pick a normal color. I have to be specific and name the *shade*, mememe. That's what you sound like, bitch."

To his surprise Jester laughs at the answer, not overly loud or exaggerated, but a laugh nonetheless. After a moment his face drops back to an easy going smile and he asks his next question. "Why does your file have so little information?" Guess there was only one warm up question then.

"File?"

"Your government file." He's pretty sure he's read about those in passing, but he doesn't know what's supposed to be in them.

"Couldn't tell you," Tommy shrugs. "I got no clue." Jester opens his mouth, but Tommy's quick to speak over him. "Nope, my turn. I answered your questions, so it's my turn to ask." Jester waves a hand for him to continue, no longer smiling. "Why can't I go gambling?"

"You're too young," Jester responds.

"Kills a man for getting in his way, but draws the line at underage gambling. Didn't think a villain would care about that kind of thing," Tommy answers back.

"Being a villain doesn't automatically erase my morals," Jester scoffs. "I'm not heartless. My morals are just more flexible than others."

"Never said you were, big man."

“My turn, how old are you?”

“Seventeen.”

“You have a lot of scars for a child.”

Tommy subconsciously tugs his sleeves a little lower even though they naturally fell past his wrists and brought his shoulders to his neck. Too bad there was nothing to do for the scars on his head except hope his hair had them covered. “I’m not a child,” he snarls. “And it’s rude to ask about other people’s scars, you know.”

“I didn’t ask, I commented.”

“Same shit asshole,” Tommy grumbles. His eyes trail to the other’s wings. “Can you fly?”

“I can,” Jester responds, wings flexing subconsciously, wrapping around his shoulders. A bolt of jealousy rushes through Tommy but he shoves it away, locking it in the deepest portion of his mind. “How did you get those scars?”

“No comment.”

“Fair enough,” Jester shrugs. “How about you tell me why you were standing in front of Las nevasdas earlier instead.”

“Next question.”

“Have you ever broken the law?”

“Yes,” Tommy responds. “Why are you such a bitch?”

“That’s your opinion. What law’s have you broken?”

“What, no! That doesn’t count! It was rhetorical!”

“It’s a question and I answered it. That was the deal,” Jester smirks and Tommy’s scowl deepens.

“Different question,” he grumbles with his arms crossed. Stupid bitch being all literal and shit. Stupid fucking loopholes.

“Where do you lie in the fight between heroes and villains?”

“With myself. I don’t give a shit about that. They’re meaningless titles. Half the time they aren’t even accurate anyway.”

“That explains why you’re always so quick to give in to a chat.”

“Yeah, sure.” Tommy stands from his seat and stretches his arms over his head. “I should be getting home now.”

“You still have a question to ask.”

“I’ll use it later,” Tommy responds, waving him off.

“Alright then. I’ll see you later, Tommy.” Jester smirks as Tommy leaves the room and wanders through the halls. Stupid bitch thinks he knows everything. He’s not wrong, Tommy doesn’t doubt they’ll meet again soon, but he doesn’t have to act all smug about it.

“Tommy Innit from...” Tommy jumps at the sudden appearance of the slime being from earlier and finally recognizes the man. It helps that his name tag isn’t warped beyond recognition anymore. It must have been because he wasn’t as solid before. That and he was split in two. Though, for all he knows he could still be split in two. Either way, he looks more human with only a vague slime-like appearance, globs of the stuff sticking to his clothes. He’s also pretty sure a tiny person shaped slime wave at him from his hair.

“Charlie Slimecicle from Las Nevadas.”

The slime beams and Tommy can’t help but feel himself smile albeit a small one. Slime’s exuberance has always been the contagious kind. It’s hard *not* to smile around him. “Do you need help finding the exit?” He probably could find his way out eventually but he’s not in the mood to spend ages learning his way around, without using the elevator, when he has a perfectly willing guide right in front of him.

“Lead the way, big man.” Tomy gestures down the hall and the slime nods his head. He pretends not to be mildly disturbed when his head bobbels slowly like it’s about to slide off his neck. The slime bounces down the halls and Tommy follows close behind. Here and there he’ll catch the same flash of orange around a corner, but he’d begun to ignore it at this point. If it hasn’t tried to attack him yet then he doubt’s it will at all.

“Here we are!”

“Thanks Slime.” He waves, the other energetically returning it, as he leaves the building. As he walks many recognize him from his parade through Las Nevadas with Jester and are quick to get out of his way. Those who don’t are pulled to the side by others. They stare at him as he passes, muttering to each other and he caught a few low tier villains watching him from the shadows. He’ll have to keep an eye on that. The last thing he needs is more villains taking an interest in him. Finally he gets to the entrance and walks out heading straight for his apartment. Maybe tonight he’ll sleep for a bit.

## Chapter End Notes

Tommy and Puffy finally meet! Tubburger has been introduced I wonder where that will lead...

As of right now, I'll be updating this on Wednesdays. That might change at some point, but for now that's what I'm going to be sticking with. I've got soooo much planned for this and I'm so excited to keep writing more. :)



# Chapter Six

## Chapter Summary

A cameo from some people Tommy doesn't know and is that something Tommy's been avoiding I see?

## Chapter Notes

TW: Self harm, blood/injuries, and panic attack

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

He did not, in fact, sleep that night. Instead he spent the entire time researching and itching at his ears. For fucks sake, why is it so itchy! He got his answer after the sun had risen and he walked into his bathroom to get ready for the day. Behind his ears stood a half moon of grayish blue feathers. He could barely remember the last time the feathers had grown in, the morning Dream broke out, and he almost expected them not to grow back in at all. They took longer to grow back in after all. Maybe they're finally slowing down. If they stopped growing in he wouldn't have to pluck them anymore!

"Stupid feathers." He leans into the mirror and carefully pulls one out with a quick yank. He winces but continues to pluck the feathers out one by one. They're a vulnerability. He refuses to let anyone take advantage of his hybridity ever again. Not through instincts. Not through chirps. And certainly not through fucking feathers.

He doesn't stop until every single primedamned feather is gone and he's back to looking completely human. The feathers sat innocently in the sink, the calamus tips dipped in blood. With a scowl he gathers them up and flushes them down the toilet before wetting a nearby towel and rubbing it behind his ears to clean off the blood. The pressure hurts, but he doesn't want to risk leaving any blood behind to dry. His health bar had dropped half a heart during the ordeal, but it was a quick fix. He ate half the pumpkin donut left over from Niki's and he was right as rain in no time. He should start carrying food with him more often.

It was a bit earlier than usual so he decided to take the long way to Clem's through Upper L'Manburg. It's a pretty nice place after all. Sure it's filled with pompous rich pricks, but it's nice otherwise. The buildings are pristine and the streets aren't covered in trash like in Lower L'Manburg. It seems like a pretty nice place to live.

Screams ring through the plaza and people start running towards Tommy and seconds later there's an explosion down the street. Wow, not even ten seconds after he complimented the



place. Well, that's the last time he decides to be nice, gods. People slam into Tommy as they run, but he remains still, his curiosity overpowering his urge to run from the danger. His first villain right! He's only seen videos! Maybe he'll actually get to see a *real villain*. Ignoring the fact that he's already met a villain on multiple occasions and technically could be considered one in the eyes of the law. And that he's also met a hero. Villains are cooler anyway. Well, most of the time at least.

A man with colorful wings touches down across the street, a similarly feathered mask on his face seemingly melding with his ear feathers, and he laughs and spins with his arms to the sides as debris rains down from the sky.

"It's Poultry Man!" A civilian screams starting a new bout of terror.

"Poultry man is a vigilante and I have no idea who he is!" He yells, voice ringing with laughter, before plastering a pout on his face. "I'm a villain! Explodo-boy!"

"You do realize no one's going to take a villain named 'Explodo-boy' seriously, right?" Another man walks up to the villain and seems perfectly at ease standing next to him. He has on a tailored suit, with a few obviously patched up rips here and there, and a large mustache on his face.

"I'm a big scary villain," Explodo-boy laughs. "My name only makes me scarier." He nods proudly and the other sighs in disappointment. Another explosion goes off in the background and the mustache man only seems more disappointed, but resigned as he drops his head into his hands.

"Kid, are you crazy? Run!" someone shouts as they run past Tommy. Nah, he's fine. They're pretty funny to watch. He's pretty sure he read about them at some point too. Explodo-boy, previously the vigilante known as Poultry Man, who's known for his love of chaos and explosions. The only reason he's labeled as a villain is because he blows up buildings. Most of which are abandoned and he, usually, avoids killing, especially civilians. The other is a vigilante named Jumbolio and could often be found trying to stop Explodo-boy from starting a resistance.

Instead of running like most would, Tommy keeps walking the villain's direction. He walks straight between the two law breakers to get to the other side of the street.

It's the quickest path okay!

"Did he just walk right through us?" Jumbolio asks incredulously.

"That he did," Explodo-boy responds, before cupping his hands around his mouth. "Hey kid!"

"Hey, no! Don't call him over!"

"Not a kid, asshat! What do you want?" Stupid people trying to talk to him when he's trying to get to work. Didn't they know he's trying to become rich?

“Are you that kid Jester told us about?” Explodo-boy yells back despite them being within a reasonable talking distance.

“Awe, he talks about me!” Tommy croons. “I knew he liked me!”

Explodo-boy laughs and Jumbolio looked like he would rather be anywhere other than here. “No wonder he likes you,” Explodo-boy laughs.

“We better leave him alone,” Jumbolio reminds the other. “Jester would have our heads if we got him hurt.”

“It’s fine,” Explodo-boy waves off dismissively. “You should get out of here before the heroes arrive! Otherwise they might think you’re helping us. And take the long way around to avoid the explosions. There’s still a few that haven’t gone off,” he yells to Tommy, again despite being in close enough range to hear at a normal volume.

“Still not a kid!” Tommy yells back, but begins to walk away.

“There’s more!” Jumbolio shouts at the same time, eyes wide, and pulls Explodo-boy away just as another one goes off and screams when a large block of concrete crashes right in front of him. Explodo-boy’s laughter echoes as Tommy walks away. It didn’t take long from there to get to the shop, he did end up taking the long way around to avoid the sporadic explosions, thankfully far from Clem’s, but he was very close to being late.

He hurries to his seat and starts patching up a dress someone dropped off. How someone could get it this ripped up he had no idea. Though he is pretty sure he found a couple thorns stuck in the bodice.

“How are you doing dear?” Clementine asks as she hobbels into the room. She shuffles around picking through fabrics until she finds one she likes and sits down to work on some embroidery.

“I’m doing good,” Tommy responds. “How are you doing, Clem?”

“I’m doing well.” She smiles at the teen and he can’t help but smile back. Clem really is the best. They settle into their daily routine and he works until lunch time comes around and it’s time for his break.

“Enjoy your break, dear.”

“I will, thanks Clem!” He hurries to the cafe and the bell rings through the building as he walks in with a smile. “Niki!”

“Hello Tommy,” she smiles back at him. “What’ll it be for today?”

“I want more donuts!”

“Of course, how many?”

“Eleven.”

She laughs, “Sure thing.” Tommy bounces on his toes as he waits impatiently for his food.

“Donuts, donuts, donuts,” he chants excitedly, getting louder with every repetition.

“Someone’s excited,” Wilbur chuckles as he walks up next to the teen.

“Yes, Niki is giving me donuts.” Tommy gasps, “Do you think she’ll give me whipped cream too? Is that something I can do?”

“Whipped cream on donuts? Yeah, why not,” Wilbur shrugs.

“Niki! Can I have whipped cream? A whole bowl of it!” he shouts behind the counter, leaning over so far he almost toppled over the edge. Niki returns with a tray of donuts, all steaming hot and fresh from the oven, and places them down with a bright smile.

“I’ll go grab that whipped cream.” A second later she’s back with his hot chocolate and a whole bowl of whipped cream.

“Fuck yeah!” He drops the primes in the tip jar, plus a little extra because Niki, being the bakery god that she is, deserves it, before scurrying to his table with his sweets like the gremlin he is. Ignoring the sound of laughter behind him as he disappears into his seat.

A minute, three donuts and half a bowl of whipped cream later Wilbur sits across from him with a cup of coffee in hand.

“Slow down, you’ll make yourself sick eating that fast.”

“No I won’t for I do not get sick. It is impossible.”

“Sure,” Wilbur scoffs and takes a sip of his drink. While Wilbur is distracted Tommy takes the chance to send five of his donuts to his inventory. You never know when you’ll need to heal from a life threatening injury. That or you get a case of the late night munchies.

“Where the fuck did they go?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” Tommy shoves another half a donut in his mouth, dipped in whipped cream of course, and gulps down some hot chocolate. Prime, he loves this world.

“They just disappeared! What happened to like half the donuts?”

“I ate them. You good, king?”

“No, they’re fucking gone!”

“That’s what happens when you eat things.”

“There’s no way you ate *five donuts* in the time it took me to take a sip of my coffee.”

“Maybe you just need to get good.” Tommy shoves an entire donut in his mouth and doesn’t bother keeping his mouth shut as he chews, making Wilbur scowl in disgust.

“That’s disgusting you gremlin.”

“I’m not a gremlin shithead!”

“Yes you are. Don’t deny it.”

“Look at me, I’m Wilbur and I’m always right. Mememe. Fuck you!” Tommy flips him the middle finger, but Wilbur only laughs. “Yeah, yeah, laugh it up asshole.”

“So, Tommy, how would you feel about hanging out later? We can go get some food or something. I know a good place in Snowchester you might like.”

Tommy narrows his eyes at Wilbur, “You paying?” Wilbur nods. “Fine.” Wilbur beams and Tommy throws a piece of donut at him. “Calm the fuck down, you’re too happy about shit.” Wilbur only laughs and eats the donut. “Hey! That’s mine!”

“Finders keepers!” Wilbur shouts, words muffled by the food.

“That doesn’t fucking count! Give it back!”

“I already ate it!” Wilbur laughs. “I can’t give it back!”

“I don’t care! Give it back asshole!” Tommy has half a mind to tackle the fucker for stealing his precious donuts but he settles for throwing another piece right in his ugly face. If he steals his whipped cream he won’t hesitate. The fucker is going *down*.

“You’re just giving me more of your food doing that.” Wilbur, again, eats the piece of thrown donut and Tommy stares at him with the most betrayed look he can muster.

“That’s it! I’m not going to dinner. I’m staying home and eating ice cubes and I will never speak to you again you asshole. Consider this friendship over.”

“Aww, I’m your friend.”

“Over!”

“No! Whatever shall I do?” Wilbur pretends to faint against the side of the booth, but is quick to grab another piece of donut off Tommy’s plate. “I’ll see you later!” Wilbur runs out of the cafe, a good portion of the other customers watching as he does so, before Tommy can get even a single word in defense.

“Fuck you donut thief!” Tommy yells after him after he’s done sputtering through his words, but the man was long gone at that point. “Asshole,” he mutters angrily as he cleans up his area. “Stealing my fucking donuts.” Tommy shoves the last donut into his mouth as he tosses out his garbage.

“Bye Tommy!”

“Bye Niki,” Tommy responds, the words sounding more like ‘Buh Ni-ie’ than actual words through the food. “See you tomorrow!” he calls behind him after he swallows the donut and sends the remaining half bowl of whipped cream to his inventory before heading back to Clem’s Couturier.

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“Bitch.”

“Do you always greet people by cursing at them?” Wilbur huffs, hands in his pockets as he waits in front of Niki’s. They never discussed a place to meet up and Tommy doesn’t have a phone let alone Wilbur’s number so he made a guess and, thankfully, was right.

“No.” Wilbur rolls his eyes with a smile and starts walking.

Tommy takes a few quick steps to catch up before falling in line next to him. “Where are we going anyway?”

“A burger place I go to whenever I’m in the area. It’s a bit far, but the food’s good.” Wilbur shrugs.

Tommy groans, “We’re going to be walking *forever*.”

“It’s not *that* far.”

“Why the hell are we walking anyway?” Tommy grumbles. “Drive me there asshole.”

“I can’t drive.”

“The hell are you good for then? You can’t drive! There’s no way in hell you have a job! I bet you’re homeless, aren’t you?”

“Wha-! I’m not homeless! I have a job!” Wilbur laughs incredulously.

“That’s what they all say,” Tommy sighs, his arms crossed over his chest and his head shaking back and forth slowly.

“I work at night!” Wilbur defends.

“I bet you live at home with your parents like a *loser*.” Wilbur’s silence is very telling. Tommy starts laughing hysterically. “Holy shit, you actually do!”

“Ok, yeah, I live with my dad, but- but, no, stop laughing! My brother does too!” Wilbur rushed to say over his laughter, his face burning red with embarrassment.

“That doesn’t make it any better,” Tommy laughs. “Weak!”

Wilbur scoffs, “By that logic you’re a loser too.”

“No, no, no, see that’s where you’re wrong, Mr. Loser. I live all on me lonesome. Have for many, many years. I am just the biggest of men, nothing like the *loser* that is you, Wibler Soup.”

“You live on your own?” Now that wasn’t what he was expecting in response. Usually when he calls someone by some weird version of their name that’s the first thing they react to, not whatever else he said. He sounded so sad too. And worried. Why the fuck is he worried anyway? There’s no way in hell he’s actually concerned. Tommy looks at Wilbur’s face and to his surprise it’s all twisted up looking like he actually was worried, but in his eyes Tommy saw something he *hated*. Fucking pity.

“Don’t pity me,” Tommy spits and Wilbur reels back.

“I’m not-”

“Don’t fucking lie to me. I can see it in you fucking eyes. Don’t you fucking pity me.”

Wilbur opens his mouth, most likely to make up some bullshit lie about it not being pity, but Tommy can see it plain as day. His mouth shuts and he hesitated before opening his mouth again. This happened a few more times before he started again. “You live in Lower L’Manburg, right?”

Tommy scowls at the subject change, but allows it. “What of it?”

“Just asking.” Wilbur continues walking, having stopped when Tommy snapped at him, with his hands in his jean pockets, facing the direction they’re going in. He, like always, is wearing a sweater, but this time it’s yellow. The first time he’s worn it again since the first time they met. It brought a sad smile to Tommy’s face as his memory drifted to a kind ghost who always seemed to be floating nearby with some blue when you needed it. He shakes his head to push the memory aside. There’s no use in thinking of things that no longer matter. Ghostbur’s gone, there’s nothing to gain from feeling sad about it.

“Where do you live, prick?”

“Upper L’Manburg.”

“Course you do, rich bastard,” Tommy grumbles. They walk most of the journey talking about the most random things that come to mind. One minute they were talking about Wilbur’s love of music and the next they’re ranting about how anteaters deserve death. The last bit was mostly Wilbur, but Tommy did get in a word or two about giraffe’s. He’s convinced that giraffe’s aren’t actually real. He refuses to believe something with a neck that long actually exists. It’s all a conspiracy made by the government for power. How they get power by manufacturing a fake animal, nobody knows, but it’s true and he will not be accepting criticism.

While he isn’t entirely sure what an anteater is, he goes along with the conversation and makes a note to himself to look into them later. They must be truly horrifying creatures if Wilbur managed to rant about them for almost the entire walk. He’s pretty sure, if given the opportunity, he would rant about them until he died from sheer hatred.

Eventually Tommy starts to recognize the place they're walking through and dread settles deep in his gut. He's got a really bad feeling about this. "The place we're going to is pretty close to Las Nevadas, some people even consider it a part of it, but I need you to promise me never to go in, okay? Las Nevadas isn't safe for civilians."

And there it is. The thing that's making him want to curl up in a ball and hide away from the world rather than keep walking. There's only one burger place near Las Nevadas and that's Tubburger. Prime, why didn't he ask for specifics? It's too late now to turn back or pick a different place, but he doesn't know if he can face Tubbo yet even if he *really* wants to see him. Fuck, this whole thing could have been avoided if he'd just asked more fucking questions. He's not ready!

"Tommy?"

Tommy comes to a minute awareness through the panic and tries to blink away the resounding fog as he turns to Wilbur. "Huh?" The fog doesn't go away. It never goes away. Not completely.

"Are you alright?"

"I'm fine."

Wilbur scrutinizes him for a second later before, presumably, repeating his request. "Promise me. Promise me you won't go into Las Nevadas."

Too late for that. "Yeah, sure thing big man."

"No, I'm being serious Tommy," Wilbur presses. "It's not safe."

"I promise," Tommy responds and he vaguely notices Wilbur nodding, but he's too focused on the building slowly entering his vision for the action to properly register. Tubburger. He feels like he's running on autopilot as his mind races through every possibility of the coming interaction. He's going to see Tubbo! But what if he doesn't like him? What if he's a completely different person? It's Tubbo! This is his *best friend*, but at the same time he's a complete stranger.

A bell is what snaps him out of the haze the time and he hears loud greetings from Wilbur as he walks towards the counter. His eyes follow Wilbur's path and there he is. Tubbo. He stood behind the register with a bright smile on his face. His voice was loud and happy as he talked with Wilbur and it made his heart *ache*. There wasn't a scar in sight. Not a single mark. No explosion scars. No blind eye. No half-missing deformed ear. Just Tubbo.

He wants to move. Tommy wants nothing more than to throw himself over the counter and hug his best friend until he doesn't feel the gaping hole in his heart consuming him from the inside out but at the same time he wants to run as far as he possibly could from the imposter posing as his friend, his *brother*. His warring limbs still, stuck between running forward and away. This isn't him. But it is. But it isn't. It is. It *isn't him*.

*“Tommy?” Wilbur looks worried again. No, it’s pity. It’s worry. Pity. Worry. He’s pitying him. Tubbo looks the same. He looks confused and concerned and so much like Tubbo it hurts. His heart is tearing itself to pieces. He’s being ripped apart from the inside out and no one can even tell. He wants Tubbo. His Tubbo. The real Tubbo. He wants his brother, but he can’t have him. Tubbo doesn’t exist anymore. Not to him. Not the one he knows. His family is gone.*

*“I need to go,” he gasps out, words a breathless struggle against the chains binding his chest and dragging him down. They barely reached his ears even as his mouth contorted to speak them. His lungs couldn’t get enough air. His chest couldn’t hold the air he needed. He’s struggling to breathe, but his lungs won’t expand and he can’t do this.*

*“Tommy, what’s wrong?” Wilbur takes a step forward, hand raised like he’s going to grab his shoulder. Maybe he meant it in comfort. Maybe he wanted to help or maybe he wanted to keep him a prisoner because one second he’s with Wilbur and Tubbo, that’s not Tubbo, in an empty burger joint and the next he sees a burning beach and a man with a mask reaching for him ready to pull him in and trap him all over again. He can’t go back. He can’t be trapped like that again. He’ll die if he has to go through that hell again.*

*“Where are you going Tommy?” The voice tunnels into his ears and into his brain and he has the indescribable urge to rip out his hair and tear through his skull until the voice is nothing but shreds of memory. He swallows thickly, backing away from the green man who’d done so much to make his life hell. Who tortured him for the sake of his own fun.*

*“I’m sorry,” he forces out, practically spitting the words with the effort it takes to get them out of his throat. He takes another step back and suddenly there’s another behind Dream. A man dressed similarly to him, but covered in blood and reaching out for Tommy even as an axe sticks out his chest and blood drips to the ground, eyes blank and dead. Dream takes another step forward and that’s all it takes for Tommy to run.*

*His heart thuds in his ears as exile slowly fades away behind him and he forces himself to keep looking forward. He has to get to Techno’s! It’s the only way! Sure, Techno will probably kill him, but it’s better than here. Better than Dream catching up to him. Better than exile. Anything is better than exile.*

*He doesn’t know how far he runs or how long, but when he finally becomes aware of his surroundings, as minute as that awareness is, he’s in a dark alley. Not his secret basement under Techno’s house. A random, generic alley. If he strains his ears he can even hear people nearby. They were loud and very clearly having the time of their lives while Tommy is here, sure he’s about to die from lack of oxygen.*

*His mouth is dry and breathing shot knives of pain through his lungs and he doesn’t want to even try moving his legs. He’s so primedamned tired, but he still can’t breathe.*

*“What has you in such a rush?” The smooth voice bounces around the alley and it takes Tommy a moment to catch it and a moment longer to comprehend it. The voice brings Tommy’s attention to the entrance of the alley, but for the life of him he can’t decipher who it is. “You were running through Las Nevadas like there was a demon on your tail.”*



*The voice chuckles, simultaneously sending a shiver down his spine and bringing the comfort of familiarity all without knowing who it is. The voice goes quiet for a moment and that scared Tommy more than there being a person there in the first place. What are they doing? Are they going to hurt him? Are they going to give him up? Are they going to take him back? Prime, please don't let them take him back.*

*The shuffle of feet in his direction makes Tommy scramble backwards into the wall behind him. The feet stop and Tommy presses himself into the corner of the alley. Prime this is a bad idea. He's cornered! There's nowhere to go!*

*"Are you alright?" He can feel the voice hovering nearby, waiting for its moment to strike, but with each agonizing second that passes the voice does not move. Tommy swallows back the terror that clings to his surroundings. He needs to breathe. Silently he begs the voice to help him. Begs for the air to fill his lungs and set him free from the confusion and terror he's lost in.*

*"Tommy, it's okay. Everything's okay," the voice says and this time it's soothing, if a little awkward. "I'm not going to hurt you." The voice gets lower, the person it belongs to crouching to the ground, speaking from a few feet away. It was so close, but so far away. He wants a hug, he wants to feel safe. He doesn't want anyone coming anywhere near him, let alone hug him. He can't trust anyone to make him feel safe. The person was so close that if he reached out he'd be able to touch them. It makes him panic. It makes him want. He wants to more than he thought he would. To reach his hand across the foot and a half separating them and beg them to comfort him. Beg them to help him. Please, he just wants to feel better.*

*He just wants to be safe.*

*"Tommy? Can I touch you?" Please don't. Come closer. Go away! Don't leave him alone! He's so scared. Please don't take him back to exile. Dream's coming for him! He can't go back. Please don't make him go back.*

*He tries to focus on the person in front of him, they're so close, but everything is blurry and his face is wet and when did he start crying?*

*"Breathe, Tommy. Breathe." He's trying! Please, he's trying so hard. Why can't he breathe? The terror is consuming him and there's no way out and he can't breathe. Help him. Go away. Save him. He doesn't need help! He opens his mouth to answers, even as his mind battles with itself struggling to decide which way to go, but instead he sobs.*

*"Please," he asks, begs, pleads the person to listen. "Please, help me. Please." He continues to sob in fear, in sorrow, in grief in every emotion taking turns at the wheel and his cries only get more violent, more painful. He hates this. He hates crying like this. Prime, he hates this.*

*The voice is still. There wasn't a single sound in the alley aside from his cries and he fully expected them to have left. Instead he feels warm arms wrap around his body and he flinches away from the burning pain that erupts across his skin. He wants to pull away. He wants to rip himself from this stranger's arms and run for the hills, but he doesn't. He presses himself into the arms, limbs going limp as he sobs. He babbles out nonsensical words through his*

*tears pleading for help and cries of being chased and rasped out apologies, but through it all the stranger holds him.*

*The voice doesn't reprimand him for crying. Doesn't scold him for his emotions. Doesn't complain about the noise he's making or how annoying he's being. Doesn't set off an explosion for his wrongdoings. This person is not Dream. It's that thought that starts to calm him down. It takes a while longer before he's fully aware of his surroundings, but the thought of being safe from Dream, of not being sent back to exile, makes it quicker than it would have been had he been alone.*

*The stranger doesn't pull away until his sobs have turned to hiccups and he's stable enough to sit on his own. When the arms pull away Tommy almost grabs onto them and holds them back in place. He's not ready to let go yet. It's been so long since the last time he's been hugged. The searing pain that greeted him along with the comfort of the hug had begun to lessen over time and without the arms around his shoulders the pain was nearly gone and he was left enjoying the lingering feeling of comfort that comes with the first positive human contact he's had in months.*

*"Are you feeling better now?" Tommy goes rigid at the voice, comfort washing away as if it was never there, his brain pushing back the fog with a rush of adrenaline that has him zoning in on the person in front of him. "Tommy?" He recognizes that voice.*

*"Qu- Jester?" His voice is hoarse and it cracked partially through the name, but it was enough to be coherent. The man was crouching in front of him, his wings stretched out and blocking the alley's entrance where a long, black car was blocking the way out. Even the sight of the wings brought him a sense of comfort sending him back to the days when his father would wrap him in his wings and hold him tight during thunderstorms and windy nights.*

*Jester stares at Tommy with an unreadable look. He wouldn't be able to decipher it if he tried and it felt oddly at home on the villain's face. He's only ever seen the merciless grins and twisted amusement, but the poker face of an experienced gambler was right at home on the villain.*

*"Glad to see you're doing better." Jester stands, hitting his hands together to dust them off and Tommy flinches back at the sharp noise. Jester leans over and stretches out a hand towards Tommy. "Need a hand?"*

*Tommy doesn't take it. He presses his shaking hands into the brick walls on either side of him and uses all his strength to hoist himself up. He wobbles and nearly falls into the dumpster, but catches himself last second. Good thing too. He does not want to fall in a dumpster. Imagine how embarrassing that would be. Almost as bad as having a panic attack in front of what might as well be a complete stranger...wait a second.*

*"What's got you all worked up?" His face betrayed nothing of his feelings, but there was a slight humor in his voice like he was trying, and failing, to lift the mood. Well, at least he's trying? It's more than he expected, honestly. He was sure Jester only cared enough about his survival to keep him from dying. Jester can't solve the mystery of his past if he's dead after all.*

*"It's nothing," Tommy mutters, dismissing the questions. "It's none of your business."*

*"Is it nothing or none of my business?"*

*"Fuck you." Tommy dusts himself off and crosses his arms, hugging them to his torso, hands gripping his elbows and pulling them as close as possible. "Just leave me alone."*

*"You see, you're in Las Nevadas right now and I can't in good nature leave a child running around. Especially after finding said child having a panic attack behind a casino."*

*"I'm not a child," Tommy grumbles, too exhausted to properly show his distaste.*

*"Come along." Tommy groans and follows the avian to the mouth of the alley where Slime was waiting by the car.*

*"Tommy Innit from..."*

*"Hello Slime."*

*"What is the matter, Tommy Innit? You seem upset."*

*"Just a bit tired, big man," Tommy sighs. Jester opens the back door to the car and Tommy stares at him. "I'm not getting in your trackless minecraft." Does he know it's a car? Yes, yes he does. Is he going to call it a minecart anyway? Yes, yes he is.*

*Jester seems confused at his wording, but doesn't mention it. "Get in. I'm bringing you home."*

*"Know that if I didn't know you already have my address I would be protesting a lot more." There's no doubt in Tommy's mind that guy found it one way or another. Tommy crawls into the car and sits as far from the villain as physically possible. It was roomy with a long seat along one side and a shorter seat along the other side next to the door. There were hollowed out shelves in the sides of the car with fancy glasses and packets of food like chips and cookies and a small cooler in a larger carved out section with ice and drinks sticking out the top.*

*The car rumbles beneath him as Jester takes his seat by the door. With a low thud the door shuts and he hears the car rev before pulling into the streets of Las Nevadas. The car crept through the crowds, people parting in front of the vehicle before continuing to walk in the street behind it. They barely paid the action any mind, conforming to the motions of the people around them, as they paraded to the next car or casino or wherever the fuck they were going.*

*It didn't take long for the silence to grate against Tommy's nerves, but he refused to say a word. He would much rather sleep than participate in a conversation, thank you.*

*"You still haven't told me what happened." Well, there goes that plan.*

*"And I'm not going to. I don't have to tell you shit." Tommy pulls his knees to his chest and crosses his arms over them. He lays his head on his arms, eyes nearly closed, but open just*

*enough to still see. It was surprisingly comfy. “Besides. I still have a question left. If I answer that then you owe me two.”*

*“Fair enough,” Jester relented. The car dissolved back into its earlier silence and it’s not any less grating to Tommy. Thankfully, it’s not much longer before Tommy sees his apartment building come into view.*

*“Oh thank fuck,” he mutters under his breath and drops his feet back to the ground. The car slowly rolls to a stop and Tommy is on the edge of his seat, literally.*

*“Excited to leave so soon?”*

*“Yes, now move bitch.” Jester stares at him for a moment before sliding to the side leaving the door free to leave from. Tommy lunges forward, hand going for the handle, but Jester gets there first.*

*“I’ll see you again soon Tommy.”*

*“Yeah, yeah, now out of the fucking way.” Jester removes his hand from the handle, putting both hands in the air and moving back with a falsely innocent expression. Tommy slips out the door and doesn’t bother stopping the door from slamming closed behind him. The car rolls away and Tommy lets out a deep breath.*

*Tommy trudges up the stairs, one step at a time, slowly getting closer and closer to the ground as what little energy he has left drains out of him. By the time he reaches his door his eyes were practically shut and he was ready to pass out, sleep required or not.*

*He shuts the door behind him, making sure to lock it, and stumbles into his bedroom. He throws himself onto the bed, feet hanging over the side to kick off his shoes, and shimmy’s under the blankets. His eyes easily fall closed and within seconds he’s sound asleep.*

*\*\*\*\*\**

*Jester sits in his chair at his desk on the penthouse floor and pulls over his file, barely a few lines longer than it had been in the beginning. He grabs his favorite fountain pen and opens the file showing off the minimal information he has on Tommy Innit. His pen flourishes across the paper writing in a looping script as he adds new information into the file.*

*There wasn't much of substance added. A few mumbled words here, a few observations there, a couple questions and flimsy conclusions jotted down. Nothing that unlocked any of the bigger picture. Once everything he found relevant, which was everything he noticed, was added to the file he leaned back in his chair and tapped the pen against his chin, ink side away. He’s seen Karl get ink on his face too many times to make that mistake.*

*The dots don’t connect. He felt like he was given a puzzle with only the corners and random other pieces from completely different parts and some of them were thrown into the mix from a completely different puzzle!*

*It only made him more determined to put them together.*

## Chapter End Notes

For those who are wondering Tommy's a crane. According to google cranes symbolize healing and rebirth and I'm like how perfect is that?

I'm creating a side story for this! It's going to be a compilation of outtakes and deleted scenes and most of all short stories that I feel would happen, but don't really fit into the main story. Things like stuff that happened during the first few time skips or moments that happen between characters outside of chapters and maybe even some backstories. I have the first chapter in the works now and I'm planning to post it alongside chapter ten or eleven, but it's possible I might post one sooner.

Also I just wanted to say thank you to everyone who's read so far and who's left kudos and commented. I've been working on this story for months now and I'm so happy you guys like it! I love reading all your comments and I'm so excited to keep writing this story :D

# Chapter Seven

## Chapter Summary

Tommy is late to work and Siren has a memorable patrol.

## Chapter Notes

TW's:  
referenced panic attack

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy wakes up slowly, blinking sluggishly to clear his eyes from his first slumber in weeks. His night was mercifully peaceful and thank Prime for that. Not a single nightmare in sight. He woke feeling refreshed and better rested than he had in a long, long time.

He felt content as he sat up and stretched. There was a satisfying crack and he exhaled letting his body slump back down. He got up and was about to walk to the bathroom to get ready for the day when he caught sight of the sky outside the window.

“What the fuck?” Tommy rushes over, hands braced on the side molding pieces and peers through the glass. The sun was high in the sky, nearly noon with how high it was. “I can sleep past dawn?” That’s news to him. Looks like he’ll have to be more careful about letting himself fall asleep. He doubts he’ll be going to sleep again anytime soon anyway. He’s had nightmares every single night for *years*. He has no reason to take the risk again just because he got lucky once.

Why would you even need to sleep past dawn anyway? There are no mobs to avoid at night and they’re not out during the day, not for long at least. This world just seems to make less and less sense the longer he’s here.

Tommy rushes through his morning routine. He changes his shirt after realizing how dirty it was getting and brushes through his hair with his fingers. He passes by the empty kitchen, but grabs his remaining half bowl of whipped cream and eats it on the walk to work. He gets some weird looks, probably for walking down that street eating whipped cream with his hands, but he flips them off and continues to shovel it into his mouth. If they don’t like it they don’t have to look.

When he finally arrives it’s to a worried Clementine standing by the register. Her face lights up when he walks in and he could see the clear film of tears brewing in her eyes. “Tommy! I was starting to worry.” She hobbles over to him as he shuts the door and corrals him into the

back room and to his favorite chair. “You’ve never been late before. I thought something happened.”

“I’m sorry for worrying you Clementine,” Tommy responded, ignoring how his chest warms with her words. He does feel guilty for worrying the woman and even more so that her worry makes him feel happy, but it was overtaken by the happiness that came with the thought of someone truly caring for him. She’s too sweet of an old lady to have to worry about someone like him. “I overslept and I don’t have a phone so I couldn’t call ahead and let you know.”

“Well, I’m glad you’re alright.” She smiles at him softly and grabs something off a shelf. She places what looks like a pile of yarn on his pile of request forms. “This is for you. I’ll be upstairs if you need me.”

Before he can get a word out she’s already gone, off to her upstairs apartment. He turns his attention to the yarn and lifts it off the paper. It’s a knitted beanie. It was made with a chunky red yarn that was soft to the touch and made him feel warm and fuzzy just by holding it.

He smiles brightly as he tugs it over his head before grabbing the nearest order and settling into his work.

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“Niki,” Wilbur whines.

“Wilbur, stop worrying,” Niki sighs, mixing a bowl of batter.

“I’m not *worried*, I’m impatient. There’s a difference.” Wilbur defends, head pressed into the counter as he’s slumped over the counter on a stool. “Why isn’t he here?” He’s definitely worried.

“You said he had a panic attack yesterday, right? Maybe he took the day off-”

“He’s a workaholic.”

“-or he went somewhere else for lunch-”

“I doubt it.”

“-or a million other reasons that don’t involve him being dead in a ditch.”

“Dead! I need to go find-”

“Wilbur!” Wilbur jolts at her raised voice and lowers himself back into his seat. “Wilbur,” she begins again, voice softer and a little apologetic. “He’s alright. He’s not obligated to come to the cafe every day. You don’t have to worry if he’s not here.”

Despite her telling him not to worry, Wilbur could see the worry in her eyes as well. Sure it wasn’t as pronounced as Wilbur’s, but she was still at least a little uneasy by the sudden change in schedule.

“I know,” Wilbur admits, voice muffled against his arms crossed on the countertop. He really is worried about him. Everything was fine when they were walking to Tubburger, sure Tommy was zoning out a bit, but there didn’t seem like there was anything *wrong*. Tommy zones out a lot, not usually that much, but it’s still a pretty common occurrence. Then when they walked in he turned around and Tommy was panicking. Not just nervous about meeting someone new panicking but full blown my life is in danger and I don’t know what to do about it panicking and he has no idea what could have caused it. It wasn’t something he did, right?

“I’m sure he’ll be here tomorrow,” Niki reassures him, almost seeming like she was trying to convince herself at the same time, and pats his back as she passes him to get to the oven. Her hand jerks back quickly from the calming motion and Wilbur looks at Niki with worry. She waves him off and he doesn’t mention it.

Niki puts the muffin tray in the oven, taking out some croissants and setting them to the side, and Wilbur continues to pout as she starts up a batch of dough.

“Do you think Tommy would want to meet Phil and Techno?” The sudden question startles Niki after the long period of silence from the man and she pauses for a moment to think. Phil would know how to help. Phil always knew what to do. He did help him and Techno after all. If Phil can’t figure out some way to help then he doesn’t know what else to do.

“I think so,” she answers after her moment of deliberation. “I’d take it slow, introduce them one at a time. Tommy’s a bit,” she tilts her head to the side as she thinks, deliberating on the right word to describe someone who’s indescribable on the best of days. “Jumpy? No, that’s not right.” She mutters the last bit under her breath, hand to her chin.

“Yeah, he’s definitely a bit jumpy,” Wilbur agrees, but Niki shakes her head.

“It’s more than that. He’s not just jumpy. A lot of the time he seems genuinely *scared*.” Niki continues to knead the dough as she speaks, apron covered in flour. “You didn’t see him the first time he showed up. He had this look in his eyes. Like he’s convinced that at any second he’d be attacked or something even worse was going to happen. Even now he’s always so cautious.”

“Is he?” Wilbur hadn’t noticed how bad it was. Sure he knew Tommy preferred to sit facing the door and he had noticed a little of what Niki was talking about, but he hadn’t realized it was that bad. Something he had noticed was there were times when Tommy’s eyes would turn gray and there was that look in them. A look that was grief and pain and *tired*. Then the moment would pass and his eyes would go back to the pale blue he was used to and it was like nothing happened.

He has a feeling they used to be bluer.

He’s assuming the color changes are some type of passive power or a lasting effect from his main power though it could even be a remnant of a parent’s power. Something based in emotions most likely. Something to do with his own emotions maybe.



Niki nods, "Something happened to him. I don't know what, but I know it was bad. He refuses to talk about himself most of the time. He doesn't know what half the stuff on the menu is, if that, and the only time he doesn't have eyes on the door is when he's ordering and even then it's not for long. I won't pry into his life, and you better not either, but I can still be there for him if he needs me. Make sure that he knows he's not alone with his problems." Niki's solemn but determined face is solely focused on the dough she's kneading and Wilbur makes a promise to himself that he would do the same.

"I get it," he agrees, head falling into his hand, elbow pressed into the table. "Until he trusts us enough to open up there isn't much to do, but make sure he knows we're here for him." Niki nods absentmindedly to herself as she pressed the dough into pie tins.

Wilbur lets out a deep breath before standing, raising his arms above his head to stretch his aching muscles. "I should be going. I have patrol soon."

"Have a good patrol, Wilbur."

"Thanks Niki," Wilbur responds and drops his arms. "I'll let you know if I see Tommy." He waves to her and walks out of the cafe with his mind spinning through all the different reasons Tommy wasn't at Niki's for lunch.

He walks into the Hero Tower a half an hour later and sighs as he steps into the elevator.

"Hold that door!" Before Wilbur can move a hand sticks itself through the small gap in the doors and they slide open, a person stepping in with a quiet 'pew'. "Almost missed it," Foolish smiles as the doors shut behind him.

"Hey Foolish," Wilbur greets, subduedly.

"You alright man? You sound a bit down."

"Yeah, just worried. A friend of mine ran off yesterday and he didn't show up for lunch today."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that," Foolish says and he does look genuinely upset for him. That genuine concern for the people around him was something he and Puffy have always had in common. "Do you want me to keep an eye out for them on my patrol?"

"No, I'm sure it's nothing," Wilbur assured him. "I'm hoping he took it as an excuse to take the day off from work. Maybe do something fun." He shrugs. "I honestly can't recall a day he hasn't worked. Even on weekends, he hasn't taken a single day off."

"Oh! I have an idea. Why don't you bring him round the tower? Who wouldn't want a tour of the famed Hero Tower?" Foolish excitedly offers and as much as Wilbur appreciates the offer he doesn't see it as a good idea. Not yet at least.

He shakes his head, "He doesn't know I work in the Hero Tower, let alone that I'm a hero, and I'd like to keep it that way. It'd be too dangerous for him and for me. That and he gets nervous around new people. I don't want to overwhelm him." Is that what he did last night?

Was he overwhelmed meeting Tubbo? That's not it, he didn't even talk to Tubbo. It didn't even seem like Tommy was looking at them. His eyes had glazed over and it was like he was somewhere entirely different. No, it must've been something else. But could it have been?

"Makes sense," Foolish shrugs, smile still present. "Offer's there if you ever want it. I'm sure Puffy won't mind. As long as she gets to ask him a few questions first, of course."

"Of course," Wilbur agrees. Puffy's ability can be a real lifesaver sometimes. Whether it be potential employees trying to get jobs for the wrong reasons or interrogating criminals, having a human lie detector on the force sure has its perks. "Tommy's a good kid."

"Can't wait to meet him," Foolish says as the doors open to his floor and with a wave he walks through them and is gone a second later. Wilbur is left alone in the elevator with his thoughts once more as it continues to rise to his floor. Why does it have to be so high up anyway?

Finally the elevator opens to his floor he shares with Phil and Techno and he hurries to his room to change into his hero suit. He pulls on the armored black shirt and trousers before throwing on his trench coat and fingerless gloves. With a deep breath in and out he shifts into his hybrid form letting his scales rise to the surface as his sclera glowed, hiding the true color of his eyes in a bright green hue. He doesn't bother with a mask, never has, since the transformation changed his appearance enough that he was unrecognizable in his human form.

As he shifts he can feel his eyesight getting stronger and takes off his glasses as they adapt to the natural night vision of a phantom. The night vision is one of his favorite parts about being a phantom hybrid. It's great for pranking. Techno is well aware of that fact.

His claws scrape against the door handle as he reopens the door leaving small scratch marks in their wake and Siren winces. He's got to be more careful. He still has nightmares about the time he accidentally shredded one of Phil's throw pillows with them. A shiver runs down his spine and he forces his thoughts away from the unfortunate incident. Better to just be careful with his claws.

Patrol starts out the same as usual, calm and slow, and Siren's grateful for it. The calmer things are the sooner he can check on Tommy. Hopefully he's there.

He finishes tying up the unconscious mugger with a quick tug and drops the excess to the ground. All that's left to do now is check on the victim and wait for the police to arrive. "Are you alright?"

She nods, "I'm alright. It's not me you have to worry about."

"Is there someone else here? Are they hurt?"

"The red. The red is coming." The woman's voice sounded increasingly frantic and Siren eased into a stance that was more relaxed and held out his hands to show he wasn't holding a weapon.

“It’s alright, you’re safe now.”

“No one is safe! The red! The red is coming!”

“Ma’am, I need you to tell me what ‘the red’ is. I can’t help you if you don’t tell me what’s wrong.”

“There is no helping. The red is taking over. It’s taking over the district.” The woman had begun to pull at her hair and step backwards. Her eyes darted back and forth, looking for some invisible enemy coming for her. “It started where most fear to tread. It rose from the ashes where none could see and snuck its way in. It’s coming for us all!”

“What’s coming-” Siren’s question is cut off by the sound of a car grinding to a stop in the entrance of the alley, gravel spitting from the tires and hitting his boots.

The door slams and a policeman walks over. “Mugger?”

Siren nods, “Yeah and the victim is-” He turns to the frantic civilian, but there’s no one there. “She’s gone.”

The man shrugs and hauls the mugger, now in handcuffs, from the ground. “Probably want to forget this all happened. They injured?”

“No, but she was talking about something red? Said it was after her.”

“She was probably in shock,” the man dismisses, shutting the door on the mugger locking him in the car.

“I don’t think-” Siren stops and sighs. There’s no point in stressing about it now. He’ll bring it up at the next meeting and leave it at that for now. “I’ll be going now. I have to finish my patrol.”

“Of course, well to you Siren,” the man says and Siren climbs up the fire escape. He hops from roof to roof, eyes on a swivel for crime as he runs. He makes a few more arrests here and there, but nothing as memorable as the woman he saved. The encounter rested in his mind and kept him distracted until the end of his patrol when he finally turned towards Lower L’Manburg and traveled until he arrived at the roof Tommy spends many of his nights on. As he approached he could see a figure sitting against the AC unit with a laptop on their lap and a donut in their hand.

He touches down on the roof, easily landing on his feet, and Tommy sends a glance in his direction.

“Siren.”

“Hey Tommy.” Siren walks over to Tommy who folds his laptop closed and sets it aside. Siren internally cheers as he takes a seat a little ways over. This is the first time Tommy’s put away his laptop when he showed up! Maybe he’s finally starting to warm up to him as Siren! “I haven’t stopped by in a bit so I thought I’d come and see my favorite rooftop friend.”

“We aren’t friends, dumbass,” Tommy responds, a smile pulling at his lips. “You just bother me while I’m trying to work.”

“Work this late at night? That’s kinda sad.”

“Says the one who works the night shift,” Tommy retorts, teeth bared in a proud grin.

“Touché,” Siren chuckles. Tommy looks out over the city and Siren follows his gaze, but there wasn’t anything that drew his interest. “What are you looking at?”

Tommy doesn’t respond for a good minute and Siren’s about to get his attention when he finally speaks. “L’Manburg really is beautiful.” From where Siren is sitting he could see the stars shining in Tommy’s eyes and the pure *love* burning for his district.

“Sure,” Wilbur agrees. He can’t really see it. He never has much reason to come to Lower L’Manburg and finds it better to just avoid the place whenever he can. Tommy takes a bite out of his donut and it only seems to make him happier. It was odd seeing Tommy like this. Usually he’s loud and quick to insult others, but today he’s calm. Content. Somehow he seems happier now than he’s ever seen him at the cafe.

“I used to live in a place like this with my brother, you know,” Tommy says. Siren could practically hear him drowning in nostalgia and stops himself from leaning forward at the information. This is more than he’s found out about Tommy’s life than ever before. “He would have loved this.” Siren stays silent, scared speaking would break Tommy’s sharing mood, but when he stays silent for just a little too long Siren risks the question dancing on the tip of his tongue.

“What happened to him?”

“That’s a story for another time,” Tommy whispers. “It’s not exactly something I like to talk about.”

“I’m sorry for asking.”

Tommy shakes his head slowly, an air of melancholy surrounding the blonde. “Don’t apologize for being curious. It’s good to be curious as long as it isn’t taken too far.” Siren nods, but he doesn’t think Tommy even notices. He’s switched from staring at the city to the half eaten donut in his hands, slowly twirling it in his fingers. Tommy takes a deep breath before smiling sadly. “Here.” He hands Siren the rest of the donut and stands. “I’m going to turn in for the night. Enjoy the view.” Tommy grabs his computer and with a nod he disappears down the fire escape with a sad smile still adorning his features.

Siren looks down at the donut in his hands in confusion before standing and staring back towards the tower with questions circulating his mind with one taking precedence, despite how minuscule of a detail it is. He could tell the donut was from Niki’s, looking like it was fresh from the oven. Everything she bakes is recognizable, but one thing doesn’t add up.

“It’s still warm...”

## Chapter End Notes

I have no idea what to write as an end note so take some fun facts ig?

Starfish don't have brains.

Every cow has a best friend and they hang out every day.

Otters have a pocket in their skin to keep their favorite rock in.

# Chapter Eight

## Chapter Summary

Jester talks to a mercenary and Quackity goes to a meeting in the Hero Tower.

## Chapter Notes

TW's:  
Manipulation?

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Shoes tap against the tile flooring of the corridor alerting the hall's occupants that someone was walking past. As the man in question saunters past people pin themselves to the walls, desperate to stay out of his path, petrified of attracting even a hint of his ire. An orange-haired man follows a step behind holding files and papers, fox tail swishing behind him, ready to accept new orders at any given moment.

"Is he here?" Jester asks with clipped words.

Fundy nods and quickens his pace to keep up. "He's waiting in your office."

Jester nods and with a wave of his hand, Fundy is scurrying off to tend to some other thing in the tower. He didn't care enough to keep track as long as everything got done. Jester stops in front of the door to compose himself, squaring his shoulders and pulling on his signature grin. He pushes open the doors and steps into the room, walking with his head held high to his desk, not sparing a single glance to the person standing in front of his desk. He lowers himself into his seat and finally turns his eyes to the person waiting for his attention. He had his arms crossed and looked bored as he waited, staring unimpressed at Jester's entrance. He's never liked being kept waiting, no matter how short that time was.

"Punz."

"Jester," Punz answers with a curt nod.

"To what do I owe the pleasure?" Jester drawls. "Drink?" He tilts his head towards the mini bar off to the side.

"I'm here for business," Punz answers.

"Suit yourself," Jester answers and gets up to make himself a drink.

“I need information.”

“You’ve come to the right place! And with such perfect timing too,” Jester trills, turning with a glass of whiskey in hand. “I have a job.”

“What is it?”

“What do you need to know?” The villains stare at each other, neither breaking eye contact, as they wait for the other to speak. Punz is the first to give.

“Something is happening in Pogtopia.”

“Pogtopia?” Pogtopia is no man’s land. You don’t go there unless you’re on the run or you have no other choice. Most who enter Pogtopia don’t ever leave, not even after death. Even the worst of villains avoid the place when they can. It’s a lawless district with a strict kill-or-be-killed mentality and a survival rate of one in fifty. Why would someone bother with a place like that?

“I don’t know what exactly, but it’s messing with my job and that makes it my business.” And there’s his reason. If there’s one thing you shouldn’t do it’s get between Punz and his money. He’s not opposed to adding whoever did it to the list of people he’s made ‘disappear’. It’s likely even. “I tracked my target to the edge of Pogtopia. I didn’t think she’d come back so I figured it was a lost cause, but she reappeared a couple days later completely different.”

“Pogtopia can change even the best of us.”

“That’s not what I mean. It was like she was an entirely different person. Not just the usual changes that happen to a person in Pogtopia. She was more powerful and her eyes were a different color. That’s not normal, even if it is the fucking ruins.”

“Their name?”

“Stand Still.” He wasn’t expecting to recognize whatever name he rattled off, but Stand Still is definitely one he knows. Why wouldn’t he know it when it’s popped up in nearly every conversation he’s had in the Hero Tower in the last two weeks.

“Last I heard she was catatonic. Her case was brought up in a hero meeting.” Different indeed.

“Like I said, there’s something going on in Pogtopia, and whatever it is got to her.”

“I suppose you want me to get you more information on whatever’s happening in that cesspit of a district.” It wasn’t a question, but Punz nods regardless. “So be it.”

“And the job?”

“What I’m about to tell you is not to be repeated, understood?”

“I swear on Lady Death, I will not tell a soul.” Jester searches the mercenaries’ eyes for any sign of a lie and when he doesn’t find one he leans back in his seat and takes a casual sip of

his drink.

“I have recently found myself a new mystery to uncover,” Jester begins. “I already have one of my best spies on the job, but that’s no assurance to his safety. He’s no use to me dead.” Jester had already put Tommy on his list, declaring him off-limits to other influential villains like himself, but that doesn’t rule out the kid getting murdered by some random mugger in an alley or something. “Spread the word, Tommy Innit is off limits to *everyone*, and if anyone so much as gives him a papercut they’ll have to deal with me.” Jester grins, wide and menacing, a promise of death on any who dare to oppose him.

“That I can do,” Punz agrees, too used to seeing the expression to feel any sort of unsettled.

“One other thing, if you ever learn anything about him, his past especially, report it back to me. As shocking as it may be, I have no knowledge about him or his past besides what little he’s deigned to share.” Punz has always been good at concealing his emotions, it’s an essential part of being a hitman after all, but Jester could see he was shocked at the information. It was barely a flash of emotion before his face was once more blank with indifference, but Jester caught it. Were he in Punz’s place he’d have been shocked too. He’s infamous among the underground for knowing everything about everyone and the fact that he doesn’t know something is a rare thing, even more so for him to admit it.

“I’ll look into what happened with Stand Still,” Jester promises.

“I’ll spread the word,” Punz nods. “One more thing before I go. I’ll need his full legal name. Just to close any loopholes.” Punz shrugs. “You know how people can be.”

“Theseus Innit Minecraft,” Jester responds. “Make sure people know not to call him such. I’m sure he’ll be able to trace it back to me and he’s weary of me as it is. I don’t need him avoiding me on top of it,” he scowls. If the teen started avoiding him he’d never be able to find out more.

“Understood.” Punz inclines his head in Jester’s direction before turning around and leaving, the door closing behind him just as Slime pops into view to escort him away.

Jester spends a good while after Punz leaves lounging in his chair, nails clicking against his glass of whiskey. The buzzing of a phone breaks him out of his silence and he grabs his government-issued device all heroes own from the top drawer of his desk having thrown it there when he returned to his office the night before. A quick glance was all it took to see the reminder for a meeting. Heroes, so oblivious they don’t even notice a villain amongst their ranks. Even believed his, admittedly shitty, cover story. Although, the best lies are based on truth, so maybe it’s not too pitiful that they believe it.

He throws back his head as he downs the rest of the drink, grimacing at the warm burn in his throat at the action. It’s better with ice. He makes a note to get someone to refill the ice in the mini bar as he stands from his chair.

He doesn’t linger in the office once his drink is gone and travels through a hidden door to his room. As he walks his wings shudder and grow and the feathers meld into each other as their golden sheen is replaced by a series of reds, oranges, and yellows making him appear as a



parrot rather than a duck. By the time he's entered his room, his face has smoothed out, his scar hidden from view even as his eye remains a milky white.

He makes quick work of changing from the suit Jester is known for into the dark blue hoodie and sweats that are more usual for his civilian persona to wear. He shrinks a few inches with the loss of his boots, and a few more for good measure as he shifts, to further separate himself from his villain self.

When he's done he gives himself a once over in the mirror and instead of the notorious villain Jester staring back at him he sees Quackity, civilian identity of the hero Morph, staring back.

Officially, Jester's power is Luck, but his mother was a shapeshifter and he was one of the lucky few to receive a weaker version of a parent's power on top of his own. He can't physically change his form like she could, but he can alter it visually to make himself appear different. It's a bitch to hold sometimes, him having to concentrate on his form for every second it's active, but it's a game changer to a villain maintaining multiple identities like himself.

While he could hide the scar bridging through his eye quite easily, he couldn't hide that he's blind in that eye. Initially, he feared his hero identity would be compromised once people noticed his blind eye, and sudden lack of depth perception, but it was an easy fix once he got the right idea. A couple threats and a faked Jester attack and suddenly Quackity's eye was Jester's revenge against the Blade for what he's done. Quite brilliant if you ask him.

He plasters a bright smile on his face, one free of malice and cunning, and walks with a bounce in his step to the lobby and out the doors.

"Were you called into a meeting Quackity from Las Nevadas?"

"I was," Quackity responds. "Bring around the car, would you?"

"Right away, Quackity from Las Nevadas!" Slime melts into the ground and a few moments later a car turns around the corner and comes to a stop in front of the building. It was a simple car as opposed to his usual limo. It blended in with the sea of mass-produced cars and provided further cover for his identities.

Quackity lounges in the back seat as Slime drives him to the Hero Tower and pulls into the parking lot. "I will be waiting here for your return, Quackity from Las Nevadas!" Slime reaches back and taps his shoulder leaving behind a glob of slime roughly the size of a golf ball. The piece of slime stretches and pulls at itself until it's a smaller, slightly deformed, version of the original and slides over to hide in Quackity's collar. Quackity bunches his hood around his neck to further hide the miniature Slime.

"I will be back in an hour." Slime nods, his head bobbling so much most would worry his head was about to slip off, and Jeser leaves the car.

"Quackity!" A high-pitched and energetic voice coos.

“Wilbur!” Quackity matches and they both start laughing. Wilbur throws his arm around Quackity’s shoulder and they merrily walk into the building. Their laughter had calmed by the time they arrived at the elevator and Wilbur hit the button to bring them up, arm back to his side. “Do you know what the meeting’s about? Is it just a weekly overview or is it something specific?”

“Weekly meeting I think,” Wilbur shrugs and Quackity nods. Not always the best information, but he could definitely get his hands on something new.

As the elevator rises he runs over his cover story in the back of his mind despite having memorized it years ago. He doubts it’ll even come up, but it’s a good practice to minimize inconsistencies and help him get in the right mindset. He’s kind and lighthearted. He makes jokes at bad times and can be a little obnoxious at times. He hates Jester for killing his family.

Quackity and Wilbur talk casually on the way up and walk into the meeting room just as Puffy begins speaking and they hurry to their seats.

“Everyone, please settle down,” Puffy announces. Usually Puffy didn’t wear her hero suit to meetings, but she’s currently donning her pirate-esque hero attire, minus the plain domino mask which is sitting on the table in a crumpled heap. She must have just finished a patrol.

The door starts sliding open, despite everyone expected at the meeting already in their seats and Puffy sighs, head dropping into her hand as the other waves for Foolish to deal with the man. How in the world has he managed to escape the infirmary *again*? How stupid for him to keep trying to get into meetings anyway. He cracked his skull. Anyone with even half a brain would know to take it easy. Just goes to show how stupidly persistent heroes can be. Quackity suppresses the scoff at his lips, and the bubbling pride the reminder brings, and turns his attention back to Puffy.

Fingers thread through his and he shares a smile with Sapnap as Puffy starts speaking again. At least he’s got one of his fiancés here with him.

“Let’s get this meeting started, yeah?” Puffy claps her hands together to get everyone’s attention and smiles at the gathering of heroes and villain. “Does anyone have anything of note from the past week?” Wilbur opens his mouth to speak. “Pertaining to your duties as a hero.” Wilbur’s mouth clicks shut earning him chuckles from most of the table. Wilbur glares at Techno who was poorly hiding his grin behind his hand and turns back to the front with a pout, arms crossed over his chest.

“What’s being done about Jester?” Quackity cuts in, scowling at the name.

Puffy shakes her head solemnly, “I’m sorry Quackity, but there’s nothing new. We don’t know his power and even if we did there’s nothing we can do. We have no evidence, no leads, and minimal access to Las Nevadas. Nothing we do have on him will be able to stand against him in court.” Quackity leans back into his seat and grumbles to himself, glaring at the space in front of him as Sapnap ‘comforts’ him by squeezing his hand and rubbing his thumb over his knuckles. He hid his smile as the people around the room sent him apologetic looks. Gods, they make it so easy.

“We’ll get him Quackity,” Sam promises. “Don’t you worry.” He nods, making sure to look grateful, and leans further into Sapnap.

“Anything else?” Puffy asks.

“I had an interesting run-in the other day,” Wilbur says. It wasn’t obvious, but looking closely Quackity could just see the unease in Wilbur’s eyes and posture. “I saved a woman from a mugger and when I asked if she was alright she kept saying ‘the red is after her’ and ‘the red is coming’. Stuff like that.” Quackity leans forward in interest. This was something he’s only heard the barest of rumors on so far. Turns out this meeting won’t be a bust after all.

“Was there anything else?”

“She said it ‘started where most fear to tread’ and ‘it rose from the ashes’. Something along those lines.” How curious. He’ll have to look into that.

“Thank you for the information Wilbur, we’ll be sure to look into that,” Puffy says. “Does anyone else have anything of note that happened in the last week?”

“I mean, it’s not the most pressing concern, but there was that thing with Tommy,” Niki mentions. Tommy? What are the odds they’re talking about the same Tommy?

“What happened to Tommy?” Wilbur’s voice is instantly frantic, fearful even. A stark change from the previous calm he displayed before the name was brought up and he nearly bolted out of his seat the second the name was even mentioned.

“Nothing’s wrong,” Puffy is quick to assure him and Wilbur slumps back into his seat with a breath of relief. “A couple days ago I met him and he called me ‘Captain Puffy’. I don’t know if it was a coincidence or if he somehow knows I’m a hero, but it’s still something to keep an eye on.”

Most of the table regarded Puffy with shock. Heroes’ identities are closely guarded secrets and very few are given permission to know them. Even then most aren’t allowed to know all of them. Schlatt and the heroes are the only ones who know the identities of every hero. It was safer for everyone if it was that way. Telling a civilian would not only put the person told in danger but the heroes themselves as well. The safest option is to just tell the fewest number of people possible.

The fact that someone who wasn’t told could know Captain’s identity is a major red flag.

“I swear I didn’t tell him,” Wilbur is quick to respond. Quackity could see the blatant worry even from across the room. Wilbur’s gone and got himself attached to a civilian, huh? He’ll have to look into this. He mentally smirked, already plotting how he could use this to his advantage.

“I know you didn’t, Wilbur,” Puffy says. “You wouldn’t put people in danger like that. Besides, it could be nothing,” Puffy reaffirms. “He didn’t show any of the signs people usually have when talking to a hero so it might’ve just been a coincidence.”

“I can ask him about it,” Wilbur suggests. “I should see him later at the cafe.” The cafe? As in Niki’s cafe? He’ll have to tag along at some point to meet this civilian Wilbur’s all worked up about. Though if he’s right about it being Niki’s cafe then he doesn’t think he needs to make the trip to meet him.

Slime shifts around his collar before settling closer to the opening of his hoodie. Casually he reaches up and readjusts the collar, tightening the strings ever so slightly, to ensure he stays hidden. It was a little odd, but if anyone were to ask he’d just say he was cold.

Puffy nods, “Do that, but be discreet.” Wilbur nods, determined.

“Should I look into his files?” Sam asks, finger tapping evenly against the table with a slightly metallic thump from the gloves of his costume.

“That may be a good idea,” Philza agrees. “I have some worries about his home life as well.” Sam nods and with a flash, an identical copy of himself was standing behind him. The copy nods towards Sam before leaving the room to retrieve the files.

“Anything else to discuss while we wait for Sam Nook to return?” Puffy asks, pressing her hands into the table and leaning her weight onto them.

“I, for one, would like to know who Tommy is,” Jack announces into the conversation, hand raised like a grade schooler. “I’ve heard bits and pieces, but I still have no clue who the fucker is.”

“He’s a regular at the cafe. Yesterday was the first day he missed lunch in the almost three weeks since he started showing up,” Niki explains. So this is the same, Tommy. There’s only one regular at Niki’s cafe that goes by the name of Tommy. The fact that he didn’t show up yesterday is only further proof. He sure does have friends in high places, whether he realizes it or not. Yet another piece of information gathered that only leads to more questions. What are the odds some random kid not only draws the interest of a villain, but also a good portion of the top heroes in the Esempii? The answer? Slim.

“Why’s he so important anyway?” George questions, tired eyes staring into space as if the world itself offends him.

“Good to see you’re finally awake,” Sappnap teases and George flips him off without lifting his head from where it rested against his hand making Sappnap cackle.

“There’s something off about him,” Wilbur responds. “He’s...odd.” He’s not wrong.

“I believe the word you’re looking for is enigma,” Niki offers Wilbur as he struggles to find the right wording.

“Yeah, that’s it!” Wilbur points in her direction, a wide smile on his face. “He’s an enigma!” A true statement if he’s ever heard one. Tommy is one of the most confusing and interesting people he’s ever met and that only makes him that much more curious to put together the pieces of the puzzle.

“He is very interesting.” Sam’s agreement causes many to look at him. Sam is looking up and to the side as if thinking, but his eyes were dim and gray rather than their usual green. “Nook found the files.” Quackity already knows the extent of the files’ information and has to agree that they’re one of the most unusual files he’s ever laid eyes on. Every other line is blank and the rest are incomplete or even wholly incorrect. Either someone entirely incompetent was in charge of his file or someone tampered with it. He’s pretty sure it’s the latter.

Sam Nook walks into the room and hands over the files to Sam before placing its hand on Sam’s back and allowing itself to be reabsorbed into his body. Sam opens the file and scans it before reading it out.

“His full name is Theseus Innit Minecraft,” Sam begins and Techno leans forward in interest. “He’s seventeen, and this is where it gets unusual, almost everything else is left blank. His hybrid status, power, family, school history. All of it, blank. There are more blanks in this file than information.”

Puffy’s eyebrows scrunch together as she reads the file over Sam’s shoulder. “That is odd.”

“Theseus,” Techno repeats. “I like it.”

“Course you do,” Wilbur snorts, rolling his eyes at his older brother.

“Is it possible the file’s been tampered with?” Phil suggests.

“It is,” Sam answers. “There weren’t any obvious signs of tampering, so whoever did it had to have been good.”

“If,” Wilbur reminds.

“If,” Sam nods.

“There’s more to him than we think,” George says, an odd sort of muted attentiveness shining in his eyes. “Everyone has their secrets, but it’s rare for them to be so...obviously hidden.”

“Do you think he’s a villain?” Jack asks.

“He’s not,” Wilbur snaps, glaring icily at Jack for the suggestion.

“No one’s accusing him, Wilbur,” Puffy pacifies. “It was only an idea.”

“A fucking stupid one,” Wilbur grumbles, slumping back in his seat with crossed arms.

“Let’s move on,” Puffy says. “There isn’t anything we can do until we learn more and even then it’s not a priority. Tommy is, first and foremost, a civilian and the only reason we pulled his file was because of a personal connection to a hero. If I find out that any of you are looking at civilian files without probable cause and proof I will not hesitate to have you suspended, am I understood?” No one hesitated to agree, not with the serious look in her eyes that promised repercussions should they disagree. No one wants to deal with an angry Puffy.

“There is one last order of business before you’re free to go. President Schlatt has asked that we support him in the upcoming election. He’s running against Eret this year,” Puffy announces. Wilbur scowls, but most of the room smiles.

“Go Eret!” Quackity whoops and everyone laughs.

“Good on him,” Jack adds, arms crossed, leaning back in his seat.

“Fucking Eret,” Wilbur mutters.

“Would you rather Schlatt?” Techno asks him, Quackity listening into their conversation over the exclamations of support the others are exchanging.

“No, I’d pick Eret over Schlatt any day, but why does it have to be Eret?” he whines. *Whines*. Like a fucking *child*. These are your top heroes everyone! Fucking pathetic.

“Get over it, Wilbur,” Techno huffs. “It’s been ten years. Are you really going to keep holding onto your petty grudge?”

“I deserved to be the lead!” Wilbur whines while somehow still sounding angry. Seriously? A decade-long feud all because Eret got the lead part instead of him? Petulant heroes and their petty squabbles. No doubt people will suffer from this childish rivalry just as people always do thanks to heroes and their trivialities.

Quackity decides not to focus on the talk of Schlatt and instead turns to Sapnap to strike up a conversation with him.

“Have you met him? Tommy, I mean,” Sapnap asks.

“I have,” Quackity responds. “It wasn’t at the cafe though.” Sapnap nods, understanding what he meant.

“I haven’t yet,” Sapnap says. “Maybe we’ll run into each other at some point.”

“Maybe,” Quackity answers the unspoken question. There’s a good chance they’ll run into each other in Las Vegas at some point.

“Meeting is adjourned,” Puffy announces over the chaos. “Leave at your leisure.” Most turn back to their conversations, but SBI, Foolish, Sapnap, and Quackity get up to leave. SBI heads towards the elevator, presumably to get to their floor, and Foolish takes the hall towards the infirmary while Quackity and Sapnap set course for the parking lot.

Slime was waiting for them right where Quackity left him and they climbed into the backseat, Slime taking back his miniature as Quackity passed him.

“You know,” Quackity says as the car starts driving. “His job isn’t too far from here if you’d like to meet him.”

“Really?” Sapnap asks before running through the words again in his head. He sighs, “I probably shouldn’t ask how you know that, huh?”

“Nope,” Quackity responds.

“Might as well go,” Sapnap says. “I wouldn’t mind meeting the guy Wilbur’s been singing his praises for.”

“Clem’s it is then.” Quackity knocks on the barrier, and having been listening to the conversation, Slime turns the car and changes their destination to Clem’s Couturier. The drive takes them into Upper L’Manburg and towards the border of Kinoko and eventually they arrive at their destination.

“Quackity from Las Nevadas and Sapnap from Kinoko we have arrived,” Slime says and through the tinted window he could just make out a small shop with ‘Clem’s Couturier’ painted across the front window in chipped, faded paint.

Sapnap is the first to get out and Quackity follows close behind, Slime closing the door behind them.

“I will be back in half an hour, Quackity from Las Nevadas,” Slime says before getting in the car and driving away.

“So he’s a tailor?” Sapnap asks.

“He is,” Quackity responds. “Shall we go greet him?” Quackity grins, toothily and a little more menacing than he usually shows around his fiancé, and gestures towards the front door. Sapnap’s hands twitch but otherwise, he doesn’t show any other signs of noticing the unusual expression. He turns away from Quackity and pushes the door open, a bell ringing above his head as he walks in.

“Hello and welcome to Clem’s Couturier! What can I help you with today?”

## Chapter End Notes

I love writing Quackity, honestly one of my favorite characters. It was fun switching up the pov too so expect more of that :)

# Chapter Nine

## Chapter Summary

Tommy goes about his day and a plan is formed.

## Chapter Notes

TW's:

dehumanization, blood, panic attack

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When the bell above the front door rings Tommy's quick to greet the new customer before he's even looked up to see who it is. Closing the till he finally looks up to see if they need any help and is met by Sapnap and Quackity standing by the door. Not Jester, *Quackity*. It's on his name tag and everything. He takes a second to compose himself before fixing up his customer service smile and pretending he doesn't know there's a villain in his shop.

"We'll just be browsing for now, thanks," Quackity says with a grin before grabbing Sapnap's hand and pulling him towards the suits. How the fuck is this guy so menacing all the time? It must get tiring. He should take a nap and leave the intimidation to someone else for a while.

As Quackity and Sapnap travel around the shop he can't help but take note of how different Quackity looks. His wings were bigger and his feathers were different colors. His scars were gone too. And is he shorter somehow? So he's a shapeshifter then. Not what he expected, but it fits oddly enough. Explains how he's gone so long without being caught at least.

The two look through clothes and mutter quietly to each other for a while as Tommy grabs the broom from the corner and starts sweeping. The amount of loose threads is going to drive him crazy at this point. No matter how many times he sweeps them all up there's always more. He's contemplating fire as a solution.

Coughing and the shuffle of feet turns Tommy's eyes to the back room where Clementine hobbles through the door into the front room. "I'm going to take the day," she says. "Will you be alright handling things on your own?"

"I'll be fine Clem," Tommy assures her with a soft smile. "I'll close down for my break." While he would just stay open instead of taking a lunch he knows Clementine would force him home early if he did. He might as well hang out with Niki and Wilbur instead of sitting alone in his apartment for an extra hour.



“Thanks dear,” she responds and pats his hand softly. It was barely even a touch, more air hitting his hand than anything else, but he was thankful. He never told her how much he hated when people were in his personal space but she always seemed to know.

He shakes his head to clear it and continues his sweeping. As he works he finds his eyes drifting up to Quackity and Sapnap every now and then. They weren’t doing much, just looking through the premade suits. After what felt like hours, but in reality was probably a half an hour, they seem to find one they like and walk over with a dark purple suit and matching green pocket square. An unusual combo but the shades went surprisingly well together.

“Would you like to try it on before you buy it?” Tommy asks as they set it on the counter. “That way you’ll know if it needs altering or if you’re better off having it remade in your size.”

“No, thanks. It’s for our fiancé,” Sapnap answers.

“Congratulations,” Tommy smiles. Good for them. He’s glad they at least worked out somewhere.

“Thank you,” Sapnap smiles back.

“Do you make custom suits?” Quackity cuts in.

“Yes, we do,” Tommy responds. “Would you like to make an appointment for a fitting?”

“Yes please,” Quackity agrees and Sapnap sighs.

“Just fill this out and you’ll be good to go,” Tommy says and hands over a form on a clipboard with a pen attached by a chain. So much more convenient than books and quills. “Just the suit then?” Tommy asks Sapnap.

“Yeah.” Sapnap pulls out a wallet, grabbing an ample number of primes from the side pocket while Tommy rings up the suit. “How long have you been working here?” Sapnap asks as he hands over the money.

“Not long- wait don’t sit on those. They will collapse,” Tommy warns and Quackity leaps away from the chair on its last leg, figuratively and literally. He tripped the other day and kicked out its legs. It’s a miracle it’s still standing.

“Thanks for that,” Quackity laughs awkwardly.

“You should have let him fall,” Sapnap says, ignoring Quackity’s indignant squawk. “It would have been funny.”

“I’ll keep that in mind next time,” Tommy laughs, bagging up the suit in a garment bag. Sapnap and Quackity were lightheartedly arguing, Quackity stressing how offended he was over Sapnap’s betrayal and holy shit did it give him whiplash. This person whining and joking around is somehow the same guy he saw send someone away to be killed without so much as a blink of hesitation? If he didn’t already know they were the same person he’d

laugh at thought. It's trippy that's what it is. "I've been working here for almost a month now actually," Tommy responds after zipping up the bag, regaining Sapnap's attention.

"So you're still pretty new to sewing then?"

"Not really," Tommy responds and hands over the bag which Sapnap carefully takes. "I've been sewing since I was...I wanna say seven, maybe eight? Sometime around then."

"Really? That's impressive."

"Thanks," Tommy beams.

"All done!" Quackity happily hands over the clipboard and Tommy takes it, eyes scanning him for similarities. It's like looking at two different people! He knows that is the whole point of having multiple identities, but his personality from Jester to Quackity is a full one-eighty and he feels like his head is going to fly off trying to keep track.

Tommy scans the form before nodding. "Looks good." I'll see you in a few days for your appointment." Quackity nods and Tommy hands him a small slip with the appointment information. "Thank you for shopping at Clem's Couturier. Have a nice day!"

"See you later Tommy!" Quackity calls behind him as they leave, waving over his head, and Tommy returns the gesture albeit on a smaller scale. Sapnap didn't look surprised when Quackity called him by his name despite him having never told them so that means he probably knows about him being Jester. Good to know.

Tommy pushes the encounter from his mind. He has more important things to do. Like cleaning the primedamned storefront! Why are there so many loose fucking threads! He spends the next half hour cleaning and by the time his break starts he still has half the shop to go.

"Fire is starting to look more and more appealing," he mutters, tossing the broom into its corner. Hopefully the walk to the cafe will cool him off a bit. He writes a quick note to Clementine just in case she decides to check on him and pins it to the register. He flips the sign on the door to 'Closed' and moves the little hands on the clock to say he'd be back in an hour, which took longer to figure out than he'd care to admit, before locking up and beginning his walk.

When he arrives Wilbur was already at the counter talking with Niki. That's weird, Wilbur's never earlier than him. Maybe his dad kicked him out. That's what he would do if Wilbur was in his house. He'd kick him out and lock the door.

"Tommy! How are you?" Wilbur beams at him and Tommy can't help the smile that crawls its way onto his face.

"Doing good, big man. What's on the menu today, Niki?"

"How about pie? I have apple, cherry, and blueberry today."

“Apple please!” It’s not Gapple pie, but it’s the closest he’s going to get, which is surprisingly close taste wise. Apparently Gapple’s don’t exist in this world which is bullshit.

“Coming right up.”

“We missed you yesterday.”

“Aw! Wilbur missed me!” Tommy holds his hands over his heart and blinks up rapidly at Wilbur who rolls his eyes, but the smile was unmistakable.

“Yeah, yeah,” Wilbur dismisses. “Where were you, gremlin?”

“I’m not a gremlin,” Tommy mutters. “I overslept so I skipped my break.”

“You’re alright though yeah? You had me worried,” Wilbur admits.

“Worried?”

“I mean, between what happened at Tubburger and you not showing up for lunch. Yeah, I was worried about you.” Wilbur’s eyes were everywhere but Tommy as he spoke, fiddling with his hands. He seemed guilty for some reason. Why the fuck would he feel guilty?

“Yeah, sorry ‘bout that big man,” Tommy huffs and looks away. Wilbur had looked back at that point and Tommy’s eyes cut away, he couldn’t handle looking at those eyes. Not when he looked worried and too much like his brother. The brother who cared about him. The brother he lost. “Won’t happen again.”

“Tommy, that’s not what I’m worried about,” Wilbur is quick to say. His voice is horribly soft, like speaking too loudly would scare him off. “I’m worried about *you*. Are you sure you’re okay?”

“I’m fine, Wilbur so just drop it,” Tommy hisses and inches away from Wilbur who had his hands out as if to stop him from running. Wilbur realizes what he’s doing and pulls back, straightening up and cleaning his throat, eyes looking away.

“Sorry Toms.”

“It’s whatever,” Tommy huffs, quiet enough to be a whisper. He places the primes in Niki’s tip jar just as she returns with his meal. He doesn’t waste time in gulping down the hot chocolate, relishing in the way it burns his throat as it goes down and how the pain pushes away the fog settling over his brain. He will not think of his brother. He will not think about Tubbo. He will not think about any of the shit he’s had to live through. He’s going to sit down in his seat with his pie and he’s going to enjoy it.

“Thanks Niki,” he says and walks over to his seat with his plate of pie in hand, the empty mug left behind on the counter. Wilbur stays behind to talk to Niki while Tommy slowly eats the warm pie on his plate. Niki put whipped cream on it. He smiles bittersweetly. Niki remembered how much he liked it. If only he didn’t have to go to an entirely different universe for her to care enough to remember something so small, but so meaningful.

Wilbur is silent as he slides into the seat across from him, Tommy slowly picking at the pie.

“Not hungry?”

“Not really,” Tommy sighs. His hunger bar is far from full, he got caught up researching and was almost late to work so he had to run to make it on time, but he didn’t feel like eating. A smell that’s usually so appetizing made his stomach turn. Stupid brain, getting in the way of him and his pie. Fuck you.

“What’s up with you, Willbitch? Got anything exciting going on?” Tommy asks, letting his fork drop to his plate. He needs a distraction from his prime forsaken memories.

“Nothing much,” Wilbur shrugs. “Oh! I never asked, who’s your favorite hero?”

“My favorite hero?” Tommy asks and Wilbur nods. “Um, Siren’s alright, I guess. He’s cool. I saw him patrolling around Lower L’Manburg recently. Captain too. She’s been patrolling the lower districts for years, you know.”

“Gotta agree with that,” Wilbur’s head bobbed up and down in agreement. “Siren’s the best. Captain’s cool too, but the Blade? He’s shit.”

“How dare you! False! Lies! Absolutely incorrect!” Tommy defends. How dare he say the Blade is shit! He’s the *Blade*. The Blade will always be cool. In both worlds. It was painfully obvious who he was, was Techno even trying? “He’s got fucking swords and shit!”

Wilbur snorts, “You’re saying he’s cool because he can use swords? All he does is swing them around and poke people with them!”

“Na-uh! He’s a really good swordsman!” Tommy counters. Even in a universe where swords are considered primitive he’s a very accomplished fighter. Not as good at Technoblade from the Smp, but still better than most. Maybe he stands a chance against this Techno...yeah, that’s doubtful.

“Weak,” Wilbur chuckles. “Siren’s *so* much better. All he needs is his voice!”

“Fuck you! Fuck you! Fuck you!” Wilbur laughs, he’s holding his stomach, he’s laughing so hard, and Tommy can’t help but burst out laughing. He’s missed having such stupid arguments.

“So,” Wilbur says, still trying to catch his breath. “Captain?”

“Yeah, she’s cool.”

“Who do you reckon she is?”

“The fuck should I know?” Tommy snarls and picks up his fork. His stomach has settled and Tommy risks taking a bite of his pie. When his stomach doesn’t immediately rise into his throat in offense he takes another. Then another. It’s so fucking good!

“I don’t know! Doesn’t she patrol by you a lot?”

“Not really,” Tommy shrugs. “I’m in Lower L’Manburg, remember? No one patrols down there. Not really. Captain only really stops by a couple times a month, if that, and Siren’s a more recent thing.”

“That’s not true. Isn’t it like a rite of passage for all the rookies and lower ranks to be sent to the lower districts?”

Tommy scoffs. “They don’t do shit. They just watch crime from the sidelines if they’re even there in the first place. They take bribes a lot too. Hate to break it to you, but they’re either skipping out on patrol or treating it like free pay, got it?”

“Really?” Wilbur seemed baffled by Tommy’s words and he can’t help but do a double take.

“You really didn’t know?” Right, Wilbur’s a rich prick who’s never so much as set foot in the lower districts. He’s just destined to be poor, huh? First in the Smp and now here. If the lower districts start an uprising against the rest of the Esempii he’s taking out Wilbur first. He’s aiming for the kneecaps. “That’s just how it is. I only just moved here and it’s already plain as day.”

“Huh...”

“What do *you* think about the Captain?”

“She’s cool. You really have no idea who she is?”

“Prime, no! For fucks sake, what are you trying to stalk her or something? Fucking wrong’un. He’s trying to stalk the Captain!”

“No, Tommy, Tommy, shush!” Wilbur frantically tries to calm him down even as the entire cafe looks in their direction. Tommy couldn’t help but laugh at how panicked Wilbur looked. You’d think he was threatening his life with how scared he looked.

“Prime! You look fucking terrified!” Tommy falls back into his seat, laughing hysterically. Wilbur’s face burns red all the way to his ears with an angry look on his face and it only makes Tommy laugh harder.

“Tommy, stop. People are looking,” Wilbur hisses and covers his head with his arms, sinking into his seat in a pitiful attempt at hiding.

“Fine peasant, I shall grant you mercy,” Tommy says through calming chuckles and finishes off his pie. Thank Prime for Wilbur, the perfect distraction. If anyone asks, he never said that. Wilbur is a bastard and deserves to die.

Wilbur sulks and takes a sip of coffee, black coffee like the asshole he is, and Tommy in turn scoops up the remaining whipped cream that slid off the pie.

“You should drink hot chocolate. It’s so much better than that shit,” Tommy scowls as he gestures to the coffee in Wilbur’s hand with his fork. He’s not actually sure what coffee is, but he’ll pretend he does so he has an excuse to make fun of Wilbur.

Wilbur smirks, “Child.”

“I’m not a fucking child, you bitch!” It was Wilbur’s turn to laugh while Tommy spits out curses like people breathe air. “Hot chocolate is the drink of the gods and you can’t tell me otherwise!”

“Sure child.” Tommy scowls, but doesn’t start cursing again, slumping back into his seat with his arms crossed. His throat hurts, that’s why. Anyone who says otherwise is a liar and a bitch.

“Whatever Willbitch, my break’s almost over.”

“Really? It’s a little early, isn’t it?”

“I’m covering for Clementine today, gotta head back early.”

“Oh, alright then. See you tomorrow gremlin!” Tommy flips him off in response and leaves the cafe, door shutting on Wilbur’s laughter, Tommy hiding a smile as he walks away.

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“Sir.”

“Speak,” the Egg’s chosen growls as he turns away from the crimson being and towards the scout.

“We found something,” he reports. “Siren has been visiting a civilian frequently over the past few weeks. We believe he’s come to care about him.”

“This is perfect!” Bad smiles and claps his hands together. “And what is the name of the poor creature?” He grins at the scout, fangs on full display, tail whipping around behind him.

“He goes by Tommy innit,” the man responds. “We’ve looked into his and found his full name to be Theseus Innit Minecraft.”

“Tommy,” Bad repeats, testing the name on his tongue, and his grin only gets wider, a manic look in his glowing white eyes. “Yes, he’ll do. He’ll do wonderfully.” He opens his mouth to continue, but the Egg rumbles, gaining his complete attention in the blink of an eye, the scout looking to their leader for wisdom it speaks in a language he can not understand. “What is it?” Bad looks at the Egg with clear awe, worship staining his eyes as he waits on the beings orders. “Of course! Anything for you!” Bad flourishes a bow to the egg before turning back to the creature awaiting his words. “The egg has no use for someone powerless. Send out a hit order.”

“I feel I should say-“

“Your opinion is not needed,” Skeppy voices from behind the demon. “Nor is it wanted.” Skeppy steps into view laden with vines that curl and twist around his being. With a faraway look in his eyes he stops beside Bad, barely a step away from the Egg. Skeppy hasn’t

been fully aware since he was found by the Egg. He was more Egg than person these days and he wouldn't have it any other way.

"I only meant," the pest reiterates. "The child is under Jester's protection. If we go after him Jester will be quick to come for us."

"Then let him come," Skeppy answers, resonate voice disinterested. "The Egg is always looking for more followers." Vines crawl up his arms and wrap him closer in their embrace, squeezing his arms even as he lifts a hand to lay against the side of the Egg. "What the Egg wants, it gets. And it wants that child's head on a *spike*." As Skeppy spits the final word in a voice filled with power and glee, thorns erupt from the vines and tear into his skin. Skeppy doesn't seem to notice as blood slowly drips down his arms to the ground, sizzling as it hits the floor. His eyes only become more fond.

"Leave," Bad snarls. "Before you join him." The bug scurries away and the Egg's two most beloved puppe- followers are left alone with their sovereign.

Skeppy hums, "We should have turned him into a Cadaver for his insolence."

Bad shakes his head. "The Egg still has use of his power. He has not yet outlived his usefulness."

"I suppose." Skeppy continues watching the vines crawling up his arms and take root in his skin and smiles distantly at the sight. "Pyrokinesis. I'm sure it will come in handy in the future."

"Possibly," Bad agrees and turns his attention to the vines crawling up his own arms. "It is all a part of the Egg's glorious plan." The vines take hold of Bad's arms and wrap around his limbs. "All hail the Egg," he breathes, reverence painted in his eyes.

"All hail the Egg," Skeppy echoes, vines tightening around him.

"All hail the Egg."

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Someone's watching him.

It's not unusual, Jester's sent people to spy on him time after time, but this time it's different. He can't put his finger on why just yet, but he knows it's not the same.

The feeling followed him from the cafe and through the streets all the way to Clem's. He felt eyes on him the entire day as he worked, even when alone in the back room. It persisted through his farewell to Clementine and with every step of his walk home. He couldn't find where it was coming from, the presence shifting every time he thinks he's found the source, so he decides the best course of action is to ignore it. Will it come back to bite him in the ass later? Probably. Does he care? Not in the slightest. That's future Tommy's problem to deal with.

He makes it back to his apartment and the feeling finally disappears as he walks into the building. He heaves a sigh of relief and opens the door to his apartment with a quick tug, it has a problem with sticking. He kicks off his shoes and relishes in the feeling of the soft carpet as he walks further into the room. He really wanted to lay down on the couch and relax for a while, but he was itching to get to the roof. He may not be able to fly, but he still likes being high up. It's in his blood.

"How weird would it be to take you to the roof with me..." Tommy nudges the couch with his foot and it barely budes an inch. It would be easy. One tap and it would be in his inventory. That's all it takes. Then he can take it up to the roof and drop it wherever he wants. It would be tough to explain to Siren if he stopped by, but does he really care about that?

Fuck it, he's bringing the couch to the roof.

He taps the back of the sofa and within a blink it's gone leaving a sizable pile of dust, and a mysterious green sticky spot he refuses to think about, in its wake. "Fucking dust." He grabs a broom and sweeps it into a pile, avoiding the sticky spot with every fiber of his being, before shrugging and shoving it into his inventory. Might as well hold onto it. Maybe he can use it against some Karen or something. The bitch won't see it coming. Just 'Poof!' dust storm!

He climbs out the window and clambers up the fire escape to the roof. He spends a few minutes finding the absolute perfect spot before plunking down the couch near the center of the roof, back against the giant box that makes cold air on the opposite side that he usually sits on. The thing's fucking magic. He wishes he had one back on the Smp. Imagine walking through the nether with a portable cold box that doesn't melt. He'd be unstoppable!

It doesn't take long for him to get comfortable on the couch and pull his laptop from his inventory and get back to researching. There's still so much to learn about this world! He doubts he'll ever run out of stuff to look into.

The conversation he had with Wilbur had stuck in his mind throughout the day and he decides to look into heroes a bit more. Sure, he's already done a bunch of research on them, but more on the system than the actual people.

He's already sure Techno is the Blade, again is he even trying, but once he looks up what the Captain looks like he realizes she's so familiar because it's literally puffy. Again, *is she even trying?* He'll admit he didn't notice at first, having looked at the photos of Captain only in passing, but it became painfully obvious once he got a good look. Not only does she dress the exact same, but her gamer tag literally says 'CaptainPuffy'. How much easier could it be? Sure, only he can see her gamer tag and he's the only one who knows she wore the whole pirate get up every day back on the Smp and she nor anyone else have any way of knowing that, but still. Be more creative Puffy. He is starting to see why he's the only one who figured it out now. Still, Captain is Puffy and Technoblade is the Blade. Both Techno and the Blade have pink hair and tusks. Does no one else see the connection? Does Technoblade even look the same here? Whatever, moving on.

He read a bit about a hero who apparently cracked his skull in a fight, weak, get good dumbass, but he hadn't really looked into it beyond that. The last article about it mentioned



Dream and he shut it down before he could even get past the name. He's assuming Dream's the villain who did it, but he is curious on what hero had the misfortune of being his target. Is there someone in this universe who he treats the same way he treated him? No, don't think about that.

He scrolls down and finds a video of the fight. It's probably not a good idea, but he's clicking it anyway. He clicks the link and scowls as a little circle in the center of the screen turns over and over and over and *over*.

"Fucking load!" He should have taken the sign for what it was because a second later the screen loads and shows exactly what he's been avoiding since he first got to this world. Tommy froze in fear as his eyes met the familiar green hoodie and mask of the man who destroyed everything he's ever cared for.

Dream.

Dream who's fighting Jester.

Dream who's a hero.

A hero. A fucking hero!

"What the *fuck*," he whispers, his breath hitching on the last word. He wants to run, he wants to run from the sheer terror on the screen, but he can't move. He can't pull his eyes from the video as Dream flips around sending attacks at the villain. Jester flits through the screen throwing cards at Dream who dodges and throws back something small and harmless looking that knocks Jester on his ass.

Tommy can feel his breath running away from him, each inhale desperate and choppy, and could see the video blurring through welling tears. He knew he was panicking, knew there wasn't really any reason for it, Dream's not there, Dream can't hurt him, but he can't get his body to listen to what his brain knows, air only getting more and more scarce as his eyes glue themselves to the screen.

Dream is a *hero*. That isn't *right*. There is no way in *hell* someone like *him* is a hero, no matter what world he's fucking from. Faster than lighting Tommy slams the laptop shut and shoves it away, barely controlling the urge to throw it off the damn roof. It clatters as it slips from the fabric of the couch and hits the rooftop, but Tommy can't bring himself to care.

Tommy presses himself against the arm of the couch and tucks his legs to his chest, arms wrapping around them in a poor imitation of a pair of wings. Wings he no longer has.

He wants to hide. He *needs* to hide. Dream's coming for him. He needs to wrap himself in his wings until it's safe to come out. He can't. He can't because Dream took them. Dream took them from him like he's taken everything else and there's nothing he can do about it.

He can't breathe. Why can't he breathe? Spots dance across his vision and he desperately tries to pull in air, but it never seems to reach his lungs. He begs and begs for something, anything, *anyone* to please, please help him, save him, but there's no one there. There never

is. He's going to die. He's going to suffocate all alone on a rooftop. After everything he's survived and endured he's going to die because he can't *fucking breathe*.

He claws at his throat, his chest, his arms. Anything he can get his hands on, but nothing helps. He still chokes, he's still suffocating and his vision is fading and he can't move. Why can't he move? Why is he on the ground? When did he fall off the couch? He blinks sluggishly, vaguely noticing he's curled up on his side in front of the couch, the rocky surface of the roof digging into his skin bringing the slightest hint of awareness, and there was a shadow of a figure in front of him.

"It's alright." The words echo through his mind even as he fades deeper into the hands of unconsciousness, the lack of air finally catching up to him. He gasps unevenly and the figure walks forward, softly laying its hands against his face.

His eyes clear just enough to make out the figure. A man who would look right at home in the aftermath of a murder spree was kneeling before him. He was covered nearly head to toe in blood and the man's eyes held an out of place look of *fond* that practically screamed at Tommy that he's *safe*. A shattered mask laid in tatters and clung to his face making Tommy want to sob at the sight.

"Don't leave me," he rasps out. "Please, not again." His voice cracks as his vision darkens around the edges, shaky hands desperately reaching for the other. He barely has the energy to do even that, barely has the willpower to struggle against the grasp of darkness.

"Everything is going to be alright, mi amigo."

With those final words, Tommy loses his battle and is taken by the darkness in his vision, lost to the world by unconsciousness.

## Chapter End Notes

The Egg is up to no good, what will Tommy do now? :)

# Chapter Ten

## Chapter Summary

Tommy meets someone familiar and has a very bad day.

## Chapter Notes

We're officially at the halfway point of the prewritten chapters and I don't know how this ended up almost 7k words but somehow it did so enjoy the long chapter :)

TW's:

blood, death, gore, implied self-harm

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

His lungs fill with smoke as fires surround him, the smell of burning flesh heavy in the air, as he claws his way through the dirt, nails splitting and breaking with every heave of his body forward across the ashy ground. Tears leave clear streaks through the grime of his face only adding to the signs of his distress and his teeth grind against each other, gritting harshly with the effort to move himself even a few inches at a time. Blood trails, warm and thick, down his back, barely contained hisses in pain making their way through his teeth with every shift of his shoulders, the red liquid sluggishly leaking from the brand new twin wounds decorating the space between his shoulder blades.

He forces his arms under himself, choking on a sob as he pulls himself onto his elbows, limbs shaking like a house of cards one gust of wind away from collapsing. He manages to lift his face from the mud and crawls the last foot or so to his target. His friend who's laying in the dirt, a bloody hole torn through their chest, mask cracked and splintered and just barely holding onto his face.

"I'm sorry," he sobs, voice barely audible as he cries, throat scratchy and sore from screaming and breathing in smoke for what feels like years. "I'm *sorry*." He stops holding back and lets his tears consume him as his arms give out beneath him and he hugs the final remainder of his friend as tight as his tired limbs will allow. "This is all my fault."

"It's not your fault," he imagines, his voice barely a whisper of memory. "It's not your fault."

Tommy doesn't listen. It is his fault. It will *always* be his fault. Dream said so. If he hadn't been so selfish and made him think he was unhappy and tried to run away then MD wouldn't have died and he wouldn't have lost his wings and there wouldn't be so much fire making the

air suffocatingly hot and everything would have stayed the way it was. Things were perfect, but he ruined it. It's his fault. It is *all* his fault.

It will always be his fault.

\*\*\*\*\*

Tommy's eyes snap open with a gasp, hands grasping for his back expecting to feel slick hot blood soaking his shirt only to meet dry cloth, perfectly clean of the blood staining his memory. He continues to gasp for breath, head on a swivel checking for a danger that isn't there as visions of burning feathers and bloody corpses fill his mind. He wraps his arms around his chest and squeezes, head tucking into his knees as he takes deep steady breaths to calm himself. His back is lit aflame with phantom pains that shoot through his spine and skewer his muscles. He bites his lip to hold back any sounds of pain and breathes. In, out. In, out. In, out.

It takes a few minutes for the pain to subside enough for him to think, the pain dulling from a roar to something manageable despite his back being long healed over by now, and lets his head fall onto the couch cushions, back pressed against the front of the sofa. He lets his mind run through everything that happened as he continues his calm, steady breaths.

He's on the roof. He brought up the couch so he could research comfortably and satiate his instincts. He found a video of Dream and Jester fighting. Dream's a hero. He had a panic attack. He saw MD. MD is dead. It was all in his head.

"Fuck," he rasps, throat sore, and let's his eyes fall closed. He doesn't want to have to deal with imagining shit again. He had enough of that in Exile. He was hoping all that was done with and that he wouldn't have to deal with it again after leaving, but he should have expected it to come back. Nothing good ever lasts for Tommy. He might as well start calling himself Tommy Bad Luck Innit at this point. Nah, he likes Tommy Careful Danger Kraken Innit better.

Ignoring that this isn't the first time he's hallucinated someone since leaving exile he trucks on, brain skipping to what happened next. Nevermind, he's not in the mood to go down that road at ass-o'clock in the morning. Nightmares aren't all that big of a deal anyway. If you don't acknowledge them then that means they never happened.

Absent-mindedly he scoops up his laptop, the machine popping away into his inventory with barely a thought spared. He did notice a bunch of scratch marks on the top from when it fell onto the rooftop, but he doesn't care enough at the moment to check it for damage. Something he'll probably regret later, especially if it doesn't turn on. Worst case scenario he has to take it to that tech shop thing near the cafe. The sign said it repaired laptops so it seems like his best bet if it actually is messed up.

The couch joins his laptop a few seconds later, disappearing with a flash of movement, and he rolls across the rooftop like a log down a hill.

He groans as he pulls himself onto the ledge before letting his body drop onto the fire escape with a metallic thud. His hair falls into his face and immediately his eyes catch onto the white

streak front and center above his eyes, taunting him. He scowls and blows it away, but it's too late. His brain had latched onto the imperfection in his once golden locks and decided it wouldn't think about anything else. It's existence existing solely to taunt him as he sluggish goes through the motions of climbing, read falling, level by level to his floor, no doubt scaring his neighbors, and weakly throws himself through his window hitting his head against the sill, his body dropping into his room with little care for any noise or pain that it may cause.

"Ouch," he says blankly as he hits the ground, arm pinned under his body and face pressed into the floor. He sighs and pulls himself up and shoves the couch back where it belongs. He changes course for the bathroom, running into the wall a few times as his eyes refuse to leave the piece of fucking hair, and stares into the mirror.

He grabs the piece of hair and rubs it through his fingers. He's tried everything he could think of to get rid of it. He tried cutting it off, but it had grown back in by the end of the day. He tried dying it, but flowers were meant for dying cloth and wool, not hair. It always wore out within a few hours if it ever took in the first place. Not a single thing he tried made it go away and he's run out of things to try. The best he's been able to come up with is to tuck it away and hope it stays hidden. Sometimes he even manages to forget about it for a while! That was all he could really hope for at this point.

He pushes the hair away properly, tucking it under his hair and behind his ear to make sure it stays in place and as he pulls his hands away his eyes catch on a dull red crust wedged under his nails. The blood was caked under each one and faint scratch marks were barely visible along his arms and neck. He sighs and turns on the faucet, sticking his hands under the overly warm water. Thankfully it only takes a few seconds for the blood to loosen, but it takes longer than he would have liked to wash it away completely. Even then the feeling stayed.

He washed for what felt like years, but still he was convinced his hands were coated in MD's blood. The phantom liquid clung with the power of spite as he scraped under his nails and washed his hands with soap at least three times over. The feeling still hadn't gone away and he decides he doesn't care enough to keep trying even with the dried flakes of blood somehow still clinging to the underside of his nails. He shuts off the sink with a little more force than necessary and slams his hands on the light switch, which he thinks looks more like a button than a switch, and huffs.

He walks back into the main room, heading for the kitchen and shakes out his hands to dry them. He grabs half a donut from his inventory and shoves it into his mouth, forcing himself to swallow past the scratchiness of his throat. The scratches fade away and his hearts bubble back up to full health, not that they were all that low in the first place.

He's about to walk out the door when he backtracks and speeds back to the bathroom. He double checks one last time that the white hair is hidden away in the sea of pale yellow that used to be a shining gold he wore with pride. Seeing it tucked away and out of view he lets out a little breath of relief before exiting his apartment.

He doesn't remember the walk to work or arriving and greeting Clementine, the memories lost to the muddled sea of fog in his mind. He blinks and hours have gone by, the sun high in the sky, his mind blurring over the mundanities of daily life for the constant loop of exile and

prison and limbo and doomsday and every fucking thing he swore he wouldn't think about anymore consuming his reality with it's grip on his brain. The one thing everything cycled back to was Dream. Who's a hero. Dream is a hero. Dream, the biggest shithead in the history of the entire *fucking* server is a primedamned hero! He can't wrap his head around it. One moment he's seething, angry that Dream could ever be looked up to so highly by this world, then the next he wants to curl up in his bedroom with the doors locked and the windows blocked out as if that would keep him safe.

How is this even possible? How can a person who's done so much shit be a hero? The person who beat him to death with a fucking potato? How is the person who *tortured him* a hero? How is the man who's made *everyone's* lives fucking *hell* a *hero*! It doesn't make sense! He's no-

He's not the same.

He isn't in the Smp anymore. He's in Esempii. He's in L'Manburg, not a crater in sight, in another universe with alternate versions of everyone he knows and cares for and already there's so many differences. What are the odds that this Dream is truly different from the one he knows? That he's actually a good, *real* hero. He's not going to get his hopes up. Dream was, and always will be, an asshole and nothing, *nothing*, not even going to a completely different universe, is going to change his mind on that.

"Tommy?" Tommy tunes back into reality, fog still dancing at the edge of his vision threatening to pull him back at the drop of a hat, the soft voice doing its best to push away enough that he could break through the blur of memories. Focusing in on it he finds Clementine standing a bit in front of him holding a small box. It was simple, worn brown cardboard with the remains of multiple layers of tape and twine tied around it.

"Sorry, Clem," Tommy responds, voice sounding far away to him. "I didn't hear you. What'd you say?" He winces at the thought of not hearing her approach. He needs to be more careful. He's getting too comfortable. Anyone could have snuck up on him and attacked him and he wouldn't have even noticed. He'll need to fix that. He can't go all soft just because he's a little less likely to get killed in this universe that he was before.

"It's alright dear," she assures him and her eyes shine with care and understanding, so much so that Tommy wants nothing more than to pull the woman into a hug and thank her for everything she's done for him up until this moment. To most it may not have been much, the kind words and compassionate nature she'd never once forgone, but to him it meant the world.

She grabs a nearby chair, one that was thankfully not falling apart at the seams, and clumsily pulls it over, sitting down with a huff of breath. She takes a second to compose herself before saying, "I have something for you."

"Clem, you didn't hav--"

"Nonsense," she cuts in, hand waving around as she stops him from speaking. "I wanted to, now open it." She shoves the box into his hands and hesitantly he leans forward to get a better look at it. His hands shake as he lifts them to the box, his fingers brushing against the

twine, and he pulls at the loose end. His hands only shake more when that damned white streak falls into his eyes and the bow comes undone atop the box. Clementine sends him a reassuring smile that he tries his best to replicate before returning to the box. He pulls the string out of the loose knot and with an easy tug it falls to his lap. He brushes what's left off the lid and pulls at the paper. It gives easily, cheap glue used in place of tape bringing a small smile to his face, and lifts the box flaps to reveal his gift.

Tommy lifts the long piece of fabric from the box's and sets aside the cardboard to give it a good look. It's a scarf.

"What do you think?" Clementine asks, her wings fluttering quickly before settling back down, a sign of her nerves. "Here, let me help you put it on." She gingerly grabs the scarf from his hands and shakes it out to its full length before folding it in half. She places it over his head and adjusts the sides to sit on on each shoulder before pulling the loose ends through the loop and letting it drop to his chest. She adjusts the size so it's tight, but not uncomfortably so before leaning back. "There! All done."

Tommy lifts the free end to look at the small piece of gleaming metal attached to it. A pin. It's clipped to the bottom of the scarf and Tommy runs his fingers over the enamel coating. It's a purple moth.

"Thank you," Tommy whispers, voice thick with suppressed tears.

"So you like it?" Clementine asks, voice soft.

"I do," he responds as the first tears fall. "I really do." Fucks sake, his emotions are all over the place today. First that prime damn nightmare and now this? Is this what a rollercoaster feels like?

"I'm glad," she responds with a kind smile. "Why don't you go get yourself cleaned up and you can take your break early today."

"Are you sur--"

"I'm sure, dear. I can tell you're a bit out of it today. Take this time and go be with your friends," she says and waves her hands to shoo him to the bathroom.

"Thank you," he responds, ignoring how his voice cracks and roughly wipes away his tears as he walks to the back room. The fog from before creeps at the edge of his brain, but he shoves it away. Not now. He's happy and he won't let something as stupid as *trauma* mess that up for him.

He splashes some water on his face and runs his fingers through his hair to fix it, white streak intertwined with another strand of hair and tucked underneath the rest and behind his ear. Once he deems himself presentable, and all the evidence of his tears is erased, he leaves for the cafe.

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*I want to meet him.*

Wilbur huffs, arms crossed, as he walks to Niki's with Techno in tow. Why his brother decided out of the blue he wanted to meet Tommy he didn't know and why he insisted they go today of all days baffled him. His brother was hardly an impulsive person, preferring to think every last thing through before acting, but now he's demanding they go today and what else was Wilbur supposed to do but agree?

Coming home to Techno waiting for him wasn't all that unusual, but coming home to Techno standing just past the door, staring, waiting for him to come back was definitely something out of the ordinary. It was also a little creepy and he nearly had a heart attack seeing Techno standing in the dark just staring at him, but don't tell him that.

Techno didn't waste any time in asking, demanding, that he accompany Wilbur to meet Tommy the next day. At first, Wilbur told him it was a bad idea Tommy doesn't like strangers and he doesn't want a repeat of what happened at Tubburger, but once Techno mentioned his voices he was quick to give in. He knows how much they bother him on a good day, let alone when they're stuck on something and decide to make nuisances of themselves until they get it, and he doesn't want to make Techno deal with that for longer than he has to so he made the executive decision to take the risk. He may enjoy bullying Techno, probably closer to minor harassment than bullying but it's his job as the younger brother so it's fine, but he knows when something's funny and when something's too far.

Worst case scenario, they get there and Tommy gets upset and he sends Techno away and he can come back another time when he's been able to give Tommy a heads up! This would all be so much easier if he had a way of warning Tommy that he was bringing someone else along. He didn't have Tommy's number so he couldn't text him ahead of time, so he'll just have to wing it. Does Tommy even have a phone? He'll have to ask him later so this situation can be avoided in the future.

"Don't scare him off," Wilbur threatens as they walk. It wasn't a particularly long one, only a couple minutes from their house, so they didn't see the point in driving, but Wilbur kind of wished they did anyway. The walk only seemed to make his anxiety over everything worse.

"I won't," Techno responds in that even voice of his. "If you haven't scared him off by now then I doubt he'll ever leave."

"I am not scary," Wilbur protests.

"You're outlandish," Techno responds and Wilbur gasps in offense.

"How dare thee brother scorn me so!"

"Theater kids," Techno mutters, which only serves to make Wilbur even more dramatic in his despair.

"You wound me brother! Truly."

"We're here," Techno announces and Wilbur's mood does a one-eighty as he sees the cafe.



“We’re here!” Wilbur repeats like he was the first one to notice their arrival and Techno rolls his eyes. Wilbur walks in first and happily greets Niki, making sure to watch Tommy’s reaction out of the corner of his eyes to make sure he didn’t make a terrible mistake bringing his brother with him. He watches as Tommy’s eyes drift from him to Techno and he tenses, panic filling his eyes. Fuck, that’s not good. He knew he’d be at least a little nervous about meeting Techno and hoped he wouldn’t get too freaked out, he *really* wishes he has his number to ask if it was alright or even just to warn him, but he didn’t think it would be this bad. He stands corrected as Tommy stares at the duo with his hand half raised to his mouth and whatever he was eating falls from his fingers to the plate.

“He’s been having a bad day,” Niki whispers when Wilbur arrives at the counter. “Bringing Techno today wasn’t a good idea.”

“I meant to warn him, but Techno said the voices were bothering him about it so…” And knowing Techno this probably isn’t the first time it was brought up and he denied the them for as long as possible before giving in.

“You rushed things,” Niki finishes, understanding.

“Yeah,” he admits. Techno stands close behind and to the side, slightly away from Tommy, but Techno being out of his view only seemed to make Tommy more nervous. The horror and the fear are gone, but he’s obviously tense, ready to sprint away the second something startles him.

Wilbur orders Techno’s tea and pastry and a coffee for himself and Niki puts their orders together in record time. Wilbur passes Techno his order and grabs his black coffee before slowly making his way towards Tommy.

He gestures for Techno to get into the booth first, hoping Techno being blocked in would make Tommy more comfortable, and sits on the edge. Throughout the whole thing Tommy’s eyes track Techno’s every movement from the twitch of his fingers to the slide of his eyes.

Tommy himself looks the same as he always did. Long black sleeves that he’s always fiddling with, red and white baseball tee, eye bags that were worryingly dark for someone of any age, and blond hair that had a habit of falling into his blue, sometimes gray, eyes. The only difference today is the red scarf wrapped around his neck with a pin on the loose end where it was pulled through the loop. It looks nice. He might have to ask where he got it from. It’s almost winter after all and his old one could cosplay as swiss cheese if it wanted to with how many holes are in it. It’s his own fault for bringing it on patrol. He’ll ask later.

“Hey Toms,” Wilbur greets and Tommy’s eyes flit to him for a split second before shooting back to Techno as if he’d lunge for the kill in the time it took to switch between the brothers. Wilbur’s smile drops for a second before he plasters it back on and hopes for a way to put the teen at ease.

“Wilbur.” Tommy greets blandly. The only other time he’d heard Tommy’s voice like this was when they first met and even then it wasn’t this bad. So wary and cautious and most of all *scared*. Tommy is *terrified* and he’s trying so hard to hide it and he doesn’t know *why*. “And…other.”

“This is my brother Techno,” Wilbur introduces in a cheerful voice that doesn’t match the anxiety swimming through every inch of his body. Wilbur glances at Techno and sees his eyes trained on the teens hair. Makes sense, it does look pretty gold sometimes.

“Techno?”

“Mhm,” Wilbur nods. “It’s a weird name, I know. You’re welcome to make fun of him for it.” Tommy doesn’t even smile, just nods and keeps his eyes trained on Techno. He must be really upset if he isn’t jumping at the chance to make fun of someone. Gods, he messed up.

“Hullo.” Tommy’s eyes swing up to meet Techno’s and he stares, after a few seconds he seems to realize his gaze and shrinks back in his seat, still perched at the edge, ready to bolt at the drop of a hat. “Sorry,” Techno says and forces his eyes away from his hair. “I like gold.” Oh how the mighty have fallen. The great oh so eloquently spoken Techno, reduced to the vocabulary of a grade schooler.

“Okay,” Tommy says slowly.

“Sorry to spring this on you,” Wilbur cuts in, hoping to break the tense atmosphere. It was weird feeling this way around Tommy. Other than those first few minutes they had always seemed to click and now it was like being right back at square one all over again. Worse than that, they didn’t have the best start, but it definitely wasn’t to *this* level.

“It’s fine,” Tommy says, but Wilbur could tell he didn’t really mean it. Right now is one of those times when Tommy’s eyes are more gray than blue, the grayest he’s ever seen matter of fact. Niki wasn’t kidding when she said he was having a bad day. He should have just told Techno to wait and brought it up with Tommy while they ate. Or even waited another day before asking. Fuck, he really messed up.

“*Gold*,” Techno whispers and Wilbur elbows him in the side, hard. Techno snorts in surprise and turns to Wilbur it’s a glare and a huff of anger.

“He’s overwhelmed as it is,” Wilbur hisses to Techno, trying to be quiet enough that Tommy wouldn’t hear, but he’s pretty sure Tommy knows anyway. “Don’t make it worse.” Instincts are shit, he gets it. It’s the whole reason he works at night. Phantoms are said to have been nocturnal and could fly so being high up at night calmed that itch in his brain. Add in a cacophony of bothersome voices egging you on into the mix and you’ve got a recipe for a bad time, but Tommy’s scared. He’s so scared and Wilbur doesn’t know how to fix this and what if he loses him? What if Tommy hates him and doesn’t want anything to do with him again and he doesn’t want to lose his friend and-

Tommy’s shaking. Wilbur doesn’t know when it started, but Tommy’s entire body is shaking and he’s gripping his hot chocolate like a lifeline. He’s scared and uneasy and for some reason the emotion that screamed the loudest was sadness. Tommy looked sad and his eyes held a sense of longing that was unexpected to Wilbur. For what, Wilbur didn’t know and that only confused him further. Why is he sad?

“Apologies,” Techno repeats, eyes turned down to look into his tea. He takes a sip and holy gods why is it so awkward.

“Instincts are shit, big man,” Tommy shrugs, somehow looking simultaneously nonchalant and on edge. “Can’t really do anything ‘bout it, can ya?” Wilbur’s mind is suddenly overtaken with questions and he really wanted to ask, but not only is it not a good time to ask, it’s also incredibly rude. Is Tommy a hybrid? Or did he grow up knowing some? If he had to guess he’d say he was a demon hybrid. They tend to have more bold personalities and he could definitely see Tommy as someone happy to play pranks on people like many are known to do. Sappnap’s gotten him pretty good a few times. He still remembers the time the man tricked him into getting locked in a closet. It was either stay there until someone found him and let him out or get covered in glitter. He tried to cheat and escape himself and got covered in bright orange glitter for an entire day. In costume. It was horrible. He couldn’t go anywhere without finding another hero laughing at him. Not to mention how long it took to get it all to go away. He was finding glitter in his hair for *weeks*.

This isn’t the time to be curious, focus!

Techno nods curtly and the awkward atmosphere only seemed to settle deeper over the table and surrounding area, driving away some of the fear at the very least. That doesn’t mean Tommy relaxes, not in the slightest, but it’s progress. “Are you hungry?” Techno eventually asks and Tommy looks up before turning his eyes away again, looking anywhere but directly in his eyes, and shakes his head.

“Nah. Already ate.” Wilbur vaguely remembered a half finished pastry on the table when they walked in, but it definitely wasn’t there now, not even a crumb left behind as proof it was ever there. It had disappeared like a lot of things tend to do around Tommy. How does he keep doing that?

“Hm.” Gods, he’s going to lose it if he doesn’t fix this soon. It’s so tense.

“So! Tommy,” Wilbur starts, clapping his hands to draw the attention of the table’s occupants. Maybe not the best idea if Tommy’s wince and how fast Tommy’s eyes whipped around to look at him was anything to go by. Fuck, what does Tommy like to talk about? He doesn’t talk about himself when he can avoid it. Even when he does he’s so cryptic and vague he might as well have said nothing. How is he supposed to start a conversation like this? Got it! “How’s work?”

“Lame.”

“That’s not lame,” Wilbur protests.

“L.”

“Tommy *likes* his job. Right, Tommy?” Tommy tenses as the attention shifts back to him while Wilbur looks at Tommy in hope. A few moments of Wilbur silently begging the teen to answer crawl by and Wilbur’s hope wasn’t for nothing.

Hesitantly, he nods. “I do.” He glances back and forth between the two brothers a few times before reluctantly scooting further into the booth. He’s still hovering a little closer to the edge than normal, but it was something and that’s better than nothing.

“What do you do?” Techno asks despite already knowing from Wilbur’s countless rants about the teen that had practically forced his way into Wilbur’s life with how quickly they became friends.

“I’m a tailor,” Tommy responds. “I sew clothes and make alterations and stuff.”

“That’s a job that requires a good amount of skill,” Techno says. “It says something to have such a job so young.”

“Thanks,” Tommy responds, his face mellowing into something akin to calm, somewhere on its way to joy, but not quite there. After a moment, and some obvious deliberation, Tommy continues. “I actually just got an appointment for a custom suit yesterday. I can’t wait to start, it’s going to be so cool! It’s been a while since I’ve made one.” With each word Tommy seemed more and more excited and all the negative emotions that weighed over him since they arrived seemed to drip away. Not completely, but enough that Wilbur could see a glimmer of his friend smiling before him. That alone was enough to make Wilbur smile.

“That does sound cool,” Techno responds, a soft smile just barely visible behind his hand. Aw, Techno’s going soft on him. He knew he’d like him.

It took a while, but by the end of the hour Tommy was acting almost like himself again. He could tell Tommy was still nervous, but he hadn’t run off or chased them away shouting words of hatred so it’s a win in his book!

Tommy ended up leaving a little earlier than usual, the pain and fear and sadness in his eyes dimmer than before, but Wilbur couldn’t blame him. It was a stressful situation that popped up out of nowhere, obviously he would want to leave early. Wilbur doesn’t doubt that he would do the same.

Honestly, he probably would have left even earlier than he did if he truly didn’t want to be there. Either way, he’s glad they were able to work past the rough patch in the beginning even if they still have a bit to go before Tommy is comfortable around them. Hopefully Tommy doesn’t hate him. He didn’t *seem* mad at him, but this is twice now he’s put Tommy into a bad situation. He wouldn’t be surprised if he tells him to leave him alone from then on and refuses to talk to him again.

No, no thinking like that. He’s blowing things out of proportion again. He’ll apologize and everything will be just fine.

“Bye assholes,” Tommy waves noncommittally and walks over to the counter, orders a scone, and leaves.

“He’s a good kid,” Techno says once the door had finished closing behind the teen with a ring of the bell. “Jumpy. But good.”

“Yeah,” Wilbur sighs. “I was hoping things would go better, but I guess I should have expected it. It’s better than what happened at Tubbuger, but still. He looked- he looked so terrified when he first saw you.” Wilbur’s voice drops to a whisper at the admission. Techno has a history of being intimidating, it’s one of the reasons he makes such a good hero, but to this extent? As a civilian? Yeah, Techno can be scary, terrifying at times when he’s trying to

be, that's something even Wilbur can admit, but that's when he's the Blade not Techno. Does he know Techno's the Blade? Impossible. All of their identities are government secrets, not even Jester could hack into the database holding their information. Maybe it's a meeting strangers in general thing? Questions ran circles around his brain, but no single one seemed anywhere near the answer he was looking for. How is he supposed to help if he can't even figure out what's wrong?

Techno shrugs, "Hopefully he won't stay that way for long."

Wilbur nods his agreement and sighs. No use sitting here overthinking things. Wilbur throws his body onto Techno, going limp and starfishing his limbs to be the max burden possible. "Let's go."

"Get off then."

"No." Techno doesn't react at first, staring blankly at Wilbur who grins smugly in return, provoking him just for the hell of it.

"I warned you." Techno stands up and Wilbur flails around as he's tossed unceremoniously to the ground. Wilbur shoots back to his feet, face burning red all the way to his pointed ears in embarrassment and waves to Niki with his head bowed as he speedwalks out the cafe hoping not to draw any more attention than he already has, the entire cafe staring as he leaves. He hears Niki laughing and walks a little faster. Honestly he probably should have expected that.

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The second he was free from the suffocating atmosphere of the cafe Tommy took a deep breath and finally allowed his body to relax. Prime, that was tense. Why'd Wilbur have to bring Techno? Sure, it's nice to see his brother, but he still would have appreciated the warning. He was not in the right mindset to deal with another familiar face today, let alone someone from his family.

Not to mention he still has conflicted feelings over Technoblade, who is apparently just Techno here which makes sense since it means his hero name isn't just half of his actual name which would have been so obvious it's sad, and he's not sure which way he leans. He misses his brother, but were they ever really brothers in the first place? Techno and Phil left when he was a kid, somewhere around when he was six or seven, and he didn't see him again until he was sixteen. Almost a full decade between visits and even then everything was about the war and exile and the revolution. There wasn't any time to be a family, not that they could be with Wilbur losing his mind and collecting tnt like trading cards. That and he's pretty sure Techno would have one hundred percent killed him if he showed up after what happened at the community house.

This is Techno, the probable hero Blade, not Technoblade, the legendary fighter he looked up to more as an idol than an actual brother. They are different people. He has to remember that. He can't go falling back into old habits. Something he will most definitely do if he forgets for even a second where he is. They don't know about the wars or the assassination attempts or the exiles. Any of his past really. They don't know and he'd like to keep it that way.

“Clementine,” he greets at a more reasonable volume than usual, backing into the door holding the scone with two hands. Why didn’t he just put it in his inventory? Stupid, getting lost in his head instead of thinking. “I got you something.”

“Oh, you didn’t have to do that,” she responds, hobbling over with her signature kind smile that makes Tommy want to hug the woman and Tommy hands over the scone.

“I know you mentioned liking the scones at Niki’s so I brought you one.”

“Oh, how sweet! Thank you dear,” she smiles and happily takes the food from his hands. He relinquishes the treat and shuffles back to his chair grabbing a custom order form as he goes. The measurements were already there so he found a dress pattern that would work for what they asked for and set to work.

He was finishing up the embroidery around the hem when Clementine called him. “Yeah?”

“It’s time for you to go home dearie,” she responds, locking up the cashier and cleaning up some scraps on the counter. She bends down to grab something off the floor and as she’s standing back up she holds a hand to her mouth, coughing into it before continuing her cleaning.

“Thanks Clem,” he grins and eyes the dress. He’s only got a few more repetitions of the pattern to get through before it’s done. He’ll finish it tonight. He sends the garment, and the thread he needs, to his inventory with a flash of motion and gets ready to leave for the night. “See you tomorrow!”

The door shuts softly behind him, the mechanism slowing the close and making it silent, as he starts the trek back to his apartment. Prime it’s such a long walk. The same feeling from the day before appears in the back of his mind and follows him along the walk, but this time it’s stronger than before. Malicious. Someone is watching him and it won’t stay that way for long.

Tommy slows his pace, eyes scanning rooftops and alleys inconspicuously as he walks, but he finds nothing. Not a shadow out of place nor unusual objects strewn about. The same tattered hero propaganda posters flutter in the wind, Schlatt’s smug face staring back with large rips through his image and unreadable words about the hero program scribbled along the bottom, and piles of garbage lay haphazardly along the streets and back alleys as he searches for threats. Tommy narrows his eyes and takes stock of his sword’s place in his hot bar. He hopes he won’t need to use it. Techno made retirement sound nice and he’s quite enjoying his so far.

Every sound draws Tommy’s attention and every crawl of a shadow is watched with laser focus. Still there’s nothing. No hide nor hair of an assailant, just waiting for the moment to strike and there is no doubt in his mind that that is what’s watching him. There’s no way he’s imagining it, he’s been on the wrong side of an ambush enough times to recognize the feeling, so where is it coming from?

All at once his every nerve lights up with danger *danger danger!* and he hears a loud crack split through the silence of the night before a sharp, red hot pain pierces his shoulder, an

object lodging itself deep in his flesh with no visible projectile for him to pull out. He stumbles back with the force and his hand flies up to cover the wound, holding his shoulder to his body like it would fall off otherwise, groaning in pain, and tries to narrow down the source of the attack, adrenaline coursing through his system numbing the pain enough for him to focus.

“You dumbass! How the fuck did you miss! I thought you were supposed to be good at this!” The words echo faintly across the rooftops and immediately his eyes find two figures crouched by the edge of a building, one messing with a long barreled gun resting on the edge of the building.

“Next time don’t fucking bump me!” The figure holding the gun shouts and elbows the other.

He glares at the people, teeth bared as anger rips it way through his chest, but before he can anything other than take a single step forward another crack lights up the night and for a split second it feels like his head is splitting open and his entire body felt like it had been dipped in fire then-

There isn’t a sound, the world seeming to pause, a silence not even a cricket’s chirp or an alley cat’s hiss could break. Nothing but a dull thump as a body hits the ground, blood seeping into the pavement, showing nothing but blank emptiness as it becomes just another corpse to add to those destined to join the nameless masses in their graves.

## Chapter End Notes

See you next week :)

# Chapter Eleven

## Chapter Summary

Revenge.

## Chapter Notes

TW's:

Death, heavy gore and violence, throwing up

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

He's back.

The sounds of the gun firing echo around him as he floats through the endless void, surrounded by complete nothingness, and he doesn't know what to do. He wasn't supposed to come back. He wasn't supposed to die so soon!

"Do not fret, my child," a voice reverberates through the black abyss. *Her* voice. "You will not be here for long."

"What?" he rasps out, words echoing around him over and over even with nothing for them to bounce off of, just as a tugging feeling wraps itself around his chest and he's yanked backward. He speeds through the void, lights flickering around him, nearly incoherent words from people he knew jabbering on as he rushes through, then he crashes back into an unbreakable wall and shoots upright, gasping for breath. His hand grips his chest as his lungs heave for air and he frantically looks around trying to make sense of what happened.

"What the fuck," he chants under his breath. "What the fuck. What the fuck. What the fuck!"

He's in his apartment. He's in his apartment sitting on his couch when he was just dead, but now he's not. He looks around in a daze and thinks back. How? He was heading home and someone was watching him and there was a loud crack sound then he was dead. How did he die? They shot him! Those fuckers on the roof shot him! He didn't realize it at first, him being so used to bows and arrows, but now it seems obvious.

However, finding out the answer to one question doesn't negate the million others he has. Why did they kill him? What did he do to them? How is he *alive*? His lives!



Tommy turns over his arm and his hearts fade into view. The newest heart faintly pulsed with red light that slowly faded out and became dormant leaving everything the way it was before. His other arm is what truly caught his attention. For the first time there was a mark there. A black tally mark that stretched from one side of his wrist to his other. He rubs his thumb over the mark and his gaze drifts back to his newest heart, or more specifically, the unknown symbol residing in it.

He pulls his laptop out of his inventory, sending out a chant of thanks to his mother for letting him keep everything in it, and types in the description of the symbol. "Infinity sign..." His hands shake as he reads, eyes blown wide in shock. "Used to stand for something of an infinite amount...I can't die." The words felt detached. He was speaking them, but the meaning wouldn't compute. He could die over and over again and he'd still wake up in his apartment? He didn't even go to limbo? How is that even possible? It shouldn't *be* possible. How the fuck is this possible !

A memory flashes through his brain and Tommy is struck by an idea.

*I'm the admin, Tommy! This is **my** world and it will do whatever I want!*

Did Dream tamper with people's lives somehow? Dream always tampered with people's lives, but the entire life *system*? That would be a whole new level of fucked up even for Dream.

Tommy holds his palm up and flexes his fingers, summoning his comm to his hand for the first time in the months he's been in the new world. A month. He was in this world for exactly a month before things went to shit. That has to be a new record. Considering his track record he's surprised it took this long for him to fuck something up. Assuming that this is his fault and not just some assholes deciding to live up to the title of course.

He shakes his head and taps at the screen until Drista's contact is pulled up. He mentally switches back to Standard Galactic and begins typing.

[TommyInnit] : I need answers

There's no response right away, but Tommy waits. A half an hour of chewing on his nails and bouncing his leg passes before the screen lights up with a new message.

[Drista] : And what answers do you need, exactly?

[TommyInnit] : what did Dream do to the life system how do I have unlimited respawns how come I still have my inventory??? I need answers Bitch! Answers!

[Drista] : I see your writing is as horrendous as always.

[TommyInnit] : its amzing just like me now answr me!

[Drista] : Lady Death it got worse.

[Drista] : As the core admin he had a certain amount of sway over the Smp including limiting the number of lives given to a person at birth and the abilities of godborne individuals while

in the bounds of the Dream Smp.

[Drista] : The default respawn count is unlimited and keeping inventory is the default for descendants or people of relation to server gods. When we sent you here we removed said limitations.

[TommyInnit] : So I'm not being given any special privileges?

[Drista] : We are not pitying you, Tommy.

Stupid Drista knowing exactly what he's thinking. She can fuck off and go to hell.

[TommyInnit] : Thanks Dris

[Drista] : Anytime Tommy.

[Drista] : But if you go this long without talking to me again I will not hesitate to smite you.

Tommy laughs out loud, knowing his friend could probably hear him from her realm outside worlds. He types his response into his comm, relishing in the familiarity of the letters. Sometimes it's just nice to write in Standard Galactic again.

[TommyInnit] : sure thing Dris

[TommyInnit] : you comin to visit soon?

[Drista] : Not for a while longer. It is taking longer than I expected to recharge.

[TommyInnit] : get your rest Drista I'll message you soon ok?

[Drista] : Okay. I will go rest now. Goodbye for now Tommy.

[TommyInnit] : see ya later Drista

He sends the comm back to its pocket dimension and drops his head into his hands with a sigh. Dream fucked with the life system. He fucked with Tommy specifically so he'd drop his inventory when he died and did the same with Wilbur. Probably Techno and Phil too, but he wouldn't know since they never died. Hell, they were far from the only demi-gods and quasi-immortal beings on the server. Dream probably messed with everyone else too. Foolish Callahan, *Fundy*. That dick! Why is he even surprised Dream would do something so completely shitty? Whatever, it's fixed now and he doesn't have to worry about it anymore. For himself at least.

Now for a different matter. Those assholes killed him! Those complete dickheads tried to take away his second chance! Curiosity satiated, the anger returns only stronger than before. His chest bubbles with rage and it floods his entire body until it was all he could feel. He's not going to let this go. He *can't* let this go. He's spent his entire *life* letting people get away with things, but not anymore. He's not going to let people push him around anymore. He's going to do something about it.

He stands from the couch and stomps over to his bedroom. He grips onto the rage funneling into him and pulls it closer, letting the burning emotion fuel him as he rips a mask off the wall. He wasn't going to stay out of trouble, not for long, and he's sure Drista knew that when she left it for him. He equips the mask like a helmet and it cements itself to his face. Intricate swirls of red dance up his cheekbones and around his eyes surrounding a sheer black fabric covering the eyes holes hiding his eye color, but not blocking his vision.

He doesn't have any armor, but he does have clothes that are well enough suited for combat. First thing he does is ditch the recognizable red and white shirt. Going out in the thing would guarantee him a one way trip to Pandora and that's not one he's willing to make. He changes into a pair of black pants that were more form fitted with pockets up and down the legs. They were a little baggy, but not so much that they would hinder his movements. Finally he slips on a pair of steel toed boots he thought were cool and bought a few weeks ago. Perfect for kicking the shit out of people who deserve it.

Watch out fuckwads because his days of cowering are over.

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Gods they're insufferable. Frank glowers in the corner while everyone else celebrates and cheers over a successful job. He'd join in but, frankly, he doesn't see this as so much of an achievement. You killed a kid. Congratulations! Now move on with your fucking life. Anyone can kill a kid so stop acting like this is some big achievement because you got him in the head.

Rob halfheartedly tosses a plus four in the middle and the noise somehow gets louder.

"Fuck you Rob!" John shouts as everyone laughs before grumpily grabbing ten cards from the pile, muttering to himself the whole time. Rob sighs and gestures for the next person to go. He leans back in his chair, hands crossed behind his head, and glares when Liam tries to peak at his cards. He backs up with his hands up in surrender and Rob rolls his eyes.

His eyes fall to the new guys and, as usual, they were all standing perfectly still in the corner of the room. Thirteen people, still as statues, none of them even blinking in the entire time they'd been there. They were sent by the cult, who says they aren't a cult, that hired them for the hit and it only solidified his resolve in staying as far away from them as possible. Even if they did pay handsomely for the job. Why did they want a kid dead anyway?

"Childish," Frank scoffs, slowly rubbing the grime off the barrel of his gun.

"You're just pissed you missed the first shot," Joseph says, cigarette pushed to the side of his mouth as he throws another card onto the pile. Rob may not have taken part in the hit itself, but he was the one who tracked the kid down. His power didn't have much use other than to find out where people are. Not that he minded, made jobs like this a hell of a lot easier, but to be honest he feels a little bad for the kid. He was just a kid after all, but that was the job and a job's a job. He's not going to disappoint his crew just because he felt a little bad.

He won't apologize for what he did. It's just business, nothing personal. You do what you have to to get by. It's not like it's his fault their hit was on a kid. That's just the hand he was

dealt. Who would even want to put out a hit on a kid anyway? What did he do to piss them off so badly? There's no use thinking about it. From what he can tell those fuckers were batshit crazy and he doesn't want to know what got the kid on their badside. He'd rather just not get on it. Or their good side for that matter. It honestly seems just as horrible.

Frank slams his rag onto the table and glares at Joseph, finger shoved harshly in Joseph's direction. "If you didn't bump me I wouldn't have fucking missed!"

"Whatever," Joseph scoffs and throws down another card. Liam groans and picks one from the deck, scowls, and adds it to his hand.

"Hey, weirdos!" Daniel shouts, but the statuesque people don't respond. "The fuck are they standing there all creepy in the corner for?"

"Who knows," Liam shrugs, taking a celebratory shot from the table. He tosses back the drink and scowls at the taste before slamming the cup upside down on the table. "They haven't said a word since they got here."

"Said? They haven't even *moved* let alone said something," Daniel retorts. "It's fucking creepy," he mutters and swirls his drink before downing the rest.

Everyone seems to freeze as a chill descends upon the warehouse. Rob mentally checks through known enemies whereabouts but none were near them which meant that this was someone new.

"Rob?" Frank asks and he shakes his head.

"No. No one we know."

"Than who the fuck is here?" Liam asks, eyes searching the room for intruders.

Rob slowly reaches for his gun, hands shaking enough that he struggles to release it from its holster. A creaking sound of a window opening scratches its way through the room followed by a slam as it's forced open.

"Who the fuck is in here!" Frank yells, gun aimed at the second floor. "Show yourself!"

Fast footsteps run across the second floor, the person out of sight, and Frank opens fires, yelling as he empties a round towards the noise.

"What the hell!" Joseph stomps over and pushes down the barrel as it clicks, chamber empty. "Are you trying to kill us all!"

"I'm trying to kill the fucking intruder!" Frank yells back, getting into Joseph's face. "And look at that! No more intruder!"

"What about the holes in the roof? What about them?" Joseph yells back. The two continue to yell to each other while everyone settles back down. Everyone but Rob.

“They’re still here,” he whispers. “I can feel them.” He might not be able to sense where like he could if he knew who they were, but he knows someone’s here. At that exact moment someone appears, jumping down from the second level, and as if in slow motion extends a blade in Joseph’s direction. “Watch out!” he yells, but it was too late. The blade carves through Joseph’s neck from behind and Frank is covered in the spray of blood, the body slumping to the ground.

The person turns enough for Rob to see their face and horror overtakes him as he realizes who it is. Teeth bared in a sick imitation of a grin, blood dripping from his blade with blonde hair covered in the blood of his friend. Even without his power telling him exactly who stood in front of him you don’t forget the faces of those you kill.

“That’s him,” Frank whispers, horrified words saying what they’re all too afraid to admit. “That’s the kid. But he died. I killed him. He’s supposed to be dead!”

“How is that even possible?” Liam says, voice panicked and shaky as he stumbles away from the corpse.

The stranger, the kid, the living *corpse* laughs. A dark sound that only succeeded in making Rob more afraid. “Oh you really fucked up,” he laughs, voice jovial as he flicks the fucking *sword* as his side sending blood splattering across the ground. Then the next second the sword swings and slices Frank across the middle. He didn’t stand a chance. His torso was cut in half and with a sickening wet thump the two halves of his body hit the floor, dead instantly. The sword is netherite. The sword is fucking netherite! How the fuck does he have a netherite sword! Only heroes are supposed to have those!

The realization sends energy coursing through his veins and he’s finally able to move, but not towards the fight. No, he’s running away. As far and as fast as he can. This is not just some kid, this is death incarnate. Trying to fight him would be suicide. He just knows it would be and he’s nowhere near ready to die.

Daniel pulls his gun and aims right for the guy’s face. He doesn’t hesitate to pull the trigger and the gun begins setting off rapid fire shots towards him. Daniel’s always been a shit shot. The demon doesn’t have to try as he dodges anything that happens to get within a foot of him and Daniel’s chamber clicks. He throws the gun to the side and his hands glow blue as water is pulled from the air and shot towards him.

The water is blocked by the flat of his blade and he continues moving forward. He’s close, too close. Rob turns to the door as Liam and John pull out their guns. Rob pushes at the doors, but they barely budge. He pushes harder, guns firing behind him, but nothing changes and he rushes to where the doors meet. He pushes as hard as he can and sticks his hand through the gap only to meet something holding the doors together.

“We’re blocked in!” he yells. There’s a scream and he whips around, gun at the ready, just in time to see Liam pulled in front of the kid and take all the bullets shot at him by John. “Liam!” Rob shouts as John throws his gun to the side in horror. Rob lines up his gun to take the shot, but he’s already moving. The guy runs at John and Daniel with his sword at the ready, but they join hands and use their powers in tandem sending a wave of ice at him.

With John and Daniel holding him back and Rob with his gun they might just win this. He was using his sword to block the blast, but he was getting pushed back. They might just survive this. Rob chokes back a sob and prepares to take the shot when a screech, or thirteen, rings through the building as one every single one of the cult weirdos runs at the teen, ready to tear him to pieces. He could never have been more wrong.

The kid scowls like thirteen people running at him with the intent to kill is nothing more than an inconvenience and starts swinging.

“Oh gods,” Rob breathes, arms weak and shaking as his gun falls to his side and he falls to his knees. The kid, no the *monster* didn’t even *hesitate*. He was cutting through people like wheat stalks with his blade. Even Daniel and John were frozen and watching in horror as person after person fell to his blade. It was like watching death dance through a battlefield. It was graceful and vicious, almost beautiful, if it weren’t for the dismembered bodies falling to pieces at his feet.

They’re not making it out of here.

Rob throws caution to the wind and starts firing into the fray, but not a single bullet meets the target, each blocked by some other body falling in the way. He fired until he was out of ammo with no way of getting more and the warehouse fell into an eerie silence.

“Come on,” John coughs through shivers from both cold and fear. “Get up.” He nudges Daniel’s side but he shakes his head.

“Can’t,” he wheezes, forced to one knee with exhaustion. “I’m out.” Daniel barely has the time to look up when a *netherite axe* comes down on him and not a second later John follows suit.

Blood dripped from the monster as he stalked toward him, a grin stretching across his face. He wasn’t just mad at them for killing him, he was actually *having fun*. They fought for their lives, desperate to survive, but to him they’re nothing but canon fodder. Nothing but a group of *weaklings* giving him an excuse to have some fun.

His gut roiled, not only at the realization but at the blood that seemed to cover the warehouse, bile forcing its way up his throat. The axe trails behind leaving a line of blood as he walks and Rob forces himself not to throw up. If he’s going to die then he’s going to die with dignity. His friends are all dead, every single one, and not one of them stood a chance. Not against someone who was shot in the head and somehow survived without a scratch on him. No one he knew would stand a chance against someone like that, but they still fought. They fought and they died trying and he’d be damned if he didn’t do the same.

He pulls a knife from his boot and lunges, blade aiming for the bastard's face, a scream of rage on his lips. He barely makes it a step before the fiery pain of a blade hitting him rushes through him and everything goes black.

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Tommy pants for breath, two hands on the axe buried into flesh and stands for a moment as he catches his breath. After his breathing has evened out he stands, axe falling to his side, and he grins.

“Holy fuck,” he half laughs, hand brushing bloodied hair from his face. “Holy *fuck*.” He did it. He won a fucking fight! Not only that, but he won by a fucking landslide! Are all people in this universe weak as fuck or did he just get lucky? Sure, those powers of theirs and those guys who ran in all at once were annoying, but even then it wasn’t as hard a fight as it would’ve been on the smp. Even Wilbur, who was more of a words than swords guy, could have beat them if he really wanted to.

He will admit that if it had been a fair fight he wouldn’t have won so easily, but between the element of surprise and his years and years of practice courtesy of the multiple wars he’s fought in since he was nine they didn’t really stand a chance. It made sense they lost, but he might as well relish in the victory for a bit. To hell with the technicalities. Though he probably should have kept one alive to question. Oh well, he won, they lost, get wrecked losers!

Is this technically still self defense? They *did* kill him first. Yeah, he’s going to go with that. The law can’t touch him, self-fucking-defense bitch!

Something runs into his eyes and blocks his vision making him curse and attempt to scrub it away only succeeding in smearing more on his face. He blinks a few times and focuses on his hand. “Oh.” He follows the trail of blood to his arms then the rest of his body. “That is a fuck ton of blood...”

Time to clean up then.

Tommy puts away his axe and looks around for an exit. The front door wasn’t too far away so he jogs over and rattles the doors, but they don’t open. Oh come on, he grabbed some random rusty chain to keep them closed. There’s no way they’re this stuck. He rattles them again, but they stay stuck. He could break the chain with his sword, but it would take a while to cut through all that metal. He groans and changes course for the window he entered in. Fucking perfect.

“Excuse me, oops, sorry ‘bout that, pardon me,” he says as he weaves his way through the carnage, apologizing when he steps on a limb or slips and stumbles a few steps. “Finally!” he exclaims as he reaches the steps and takes them two at a time to the top. He runs up to the window and climbs through, crouching on the sill and waving his arms for balance, before hopping onto the next roof. He wobbles for a second before regaining his balance. “And he sticks the landing! Now to get home...”

Tommy slinks through alley’s and back streets, traveling through the shadows and ducking around corners to avoid vigilante’s until he’s finally back at his apartment. He shimmies his way up the fire escape and climbs through his window into his living room. Once in the bathroom he plugs up the sink and turns on the water. It takes a minute for it to fill up, but once it gets to a good level he turns off the tap and dumps his clothes, and mask, into the pool. He scowls at the reflection in the mirror, hair covered in shit to the point where he could probably pass it off as dye. It was going to be a bitch to get out. Welp, time for a shower.

When he's done he bandages his injuries, the few he couldn't heal after he ran out of food, and changes into a pair of pajamas which are comfy as fuck by the way. Why hasn't he worn them yet? He might have to start wearing them more often.

Turning to his clothes floating in the sink he unplugs the stopper, rusty red water draining away, and turns on the faucet. He starts scrubbing at the clothes to get out the blood, hands sudsing with soap bubbles as he works. The only way he'll ever be able to wear any of it again is if he's quick to get it all out. With the way it's looking he might have to make them his designated murder clothes. That way it won't really matter if it stains. Not that he's going to commit murder again anytime soon. Nope, definitely not.

By this point the clothes were mostly clean, if a little stained, and Tommy moved them to the bathtub to soak, careful not to let them drip on the floor. Shit, the floor!

He runs into the living room and checks for blood, even sticking his head out the window and thankfully it seemed like the blood was dried enough when he got home that it had stopped dripping before he got back. No trail, thank the gods.

After a quick check outside just in case, no blood trail within a couple hundred feet thank Prime, he walks back inside and gets back to the dirty clothes. He grabs the soap and starts giving them one final good scrub. The pajamas shirt had short sleeves, so as he worked his patchwork skin of scars danced in the corner of his vision. Burns up and down his forearms from explosions and fires. A slice a little above his right elbow from a sword he was too slow to get out of the way from nearly completely faded with age. A small chunk missing lower on that same arm from a zombie. Multiple scarred over holes in his arms from spider bites, mostly from cave spiders. He really hates those mother fuckers. There were more, his arms often his main defense against all kinds of mobs and people, but if he named them all he'd be there for a lot longer than he was willing to be and he'd much rather relax for a bit before work.

He hums a tune as he works, red bubbles foaming up his clothes and mask, but not as extreme as before. He chuckles a bit at the odd scene he makes. A teenager fresh from a murder scene happily humming to himself as he cleans blood from his clothes in a bathtub. Definitely not something you see everyday.

Eventually he has to admit that nothing else is going to wash out and he'll have to live with the remaining stains and hangs the clothes over the shower curtain rod to dry. The stains weren't too visible at first glance, but if you knew where to look your eyes were drawn right to them. He rinses off the mask, thankfully made of an easy to wash material, and calls it a day. Or early morning since it's around three am now.

He doesn't want to sleep and he doesn't feel like going to the roof so what should he do? He'll just chill in bed. His food bar hovered at the edge of his vision, his hearts settled at a little over half health, but he had no food left to bring it back up hence the injuries that needed bandaging. The perfect excuse to go to Niki's for breakfast.

As he lays down a message flits across the edge of his vision and for the first time since he arrived he acknowledges its existence.



[Respawn Set]

He smiles, a gleam in his eyes. What else can he set? Now that there's a use to it he might as well explore his respawns a bit. He runs around his apartment trying to turn different things into his respawn point and most didn't work, but he found that if he could, theoretically, fall asleep on it then he could set it as his respawn point. Table? Point set! Chair? Yup! Top of the fridge? Apparently! Inside the fridge? Unfortunately, no. That would have been so much fun for messing with people. Oh this is so fucking awesome. He's going to be unstoppable!

He messed around with his respawn for a while, but eventually the sun was starting to rise and he decided it was time to head out if he wanted to be at Niki's with enough time to eat before work. He opens his inventory to make sure he has everything and notices something sitting to the side of the screen. Fuck, he forgot the embroidery! He scowls and goes to close the floating window, but his hand hits the dress and suddenly it's equipped the same way armor would be.

"Oh fuck yeah," Tommy grins. "I can fuck with so many people with this." He unequips the dress and runs into the bathroom to grab his, now dry, clothes. He sends them to his inventory, giddy with excitement. This is going to revolutionize changing! Think of the time it'll save! Within seconds he's got on his spare black shirt, red and white shirt, and jeans and he throws his pajamas into his inventory for the hell of it. He's going to have so much more time for other things now!

He walks the trip to the shopping center with a grin on his face and makes his way into Niki's with that very same grin. His hunger bar had only gotten lower during the walk, falling just under halfway now, and he's ready for some god-tier pastries.

"Hello Niki," he greets and she looks up in shock, blinking a few times as if she can't believe what she's seeing.

"Tommy! You're here early."

"Mhm," he nods. "I left the apartment a bit early and thought, 'hey, let me see what my good pal Niki is up to!' Well that and I want sweets." Niki chuckles as he rests his hands on the counter and squints up at the menu. "What even is coffee anyway?" He knows Wilbur drinks it and has made fun of him for it on multiple occasions, but he doesn't know what it is really.

"It's a drink that gives you a boost in energy," she responds. "Honestly the only thing that gets me through the day sometimes," she chuckles.

"Seriously?" Like a strength potion! He didn't think those were a thing here what with there being no Nether and all. "Gimme, gimme, gimme," he says, making grabbing motions with his hands.

She laughs, "Any specific way you want it? Like flavors or anything?"

A customizable potion! Goodbye shitty tasting potions! Hello delicious strength potion! His eyes widen even more in excitement and he can't stop himself from bouncing on his toes a bit. He's having the best fucking morning. "Like what?"

“We have vanilla, pumpkin spice, anything really,” she explains and gestures to a row of glass bottles with labels. “You can also add things like sugar and creamer too if that’s what you want.”

“Whipped cream?” he asks with stars in his eyes. She nods. “I need coffee, now! How have I not tried it yet!” Another way to eat whipped cream! And with a potion too! Who knew he’s been missing out on something so great for so long?

Niki’s laughs and starts making what she called an ‘americano with vanilla creamer and whipped cream on top’. “Here you go.” She slides it across the counter and he chugs it. “Tommy-!”

“I feel like I could fight Prime and win,” he answers, wide eyes and trembling with energy. “It’s the drink of the gods. I need more.”

“Tommy, I don’t think-”

“I need the power to vanquish gods!” Not that he would, he is friends with quite a few of them after all. The empty cup shakes in his hand and he realizes there is still whipped cream in the bottom so he overturns it into his mouth and starts tapping the bottom to get it into his mouth.

“How about a compromise? I’ll give you a bowl of whipped cream-”

“Deal!” He eyes the case as she gets the whipped cream ready, focus slipping back to his need for food, and decides, unfortunately, nothing on display would give him the hearts he needs. No sweets for now. The coffee gave him a little boost, similar to a golden apple which is fucking awesome, but he’s pretty sure it’s temporary and he’s not looking forward to the crash he’s bound to have.

“Another one of those sandwiches too please,” he says as Niki comes back. “The one you gave me last time with the cheese and meat.”

“The turkey provolone?”

“Yeah, that one.” She nods and hands him the bowl of whipped cream and he chows away with his spoon, setting the primes on the counter when she returns, warm sandwich in hand. “Thanks Niki!”

“Anytime Tommy,” she answers with a soft smile.

“Now if you’ll excuse me, I have a god to fight,” he says with a self assured nod before running out of the shop. He did not, in fact, fight Prime or any of the other gods he knows, personally or otherwise. Instead he climbs to the roof and eats his sandwich in peace despite his jittery limbs. He’s gotta keep a few cups of this coffee shit in his inventory for fights. With the power of coffee no one would be able to stand in his way!

Once his sandwich is gone, and his hearts are at a better level, he sets off for Clem’s.

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“Siren.” Siren stops on his way to the elevator and turns around to look at Captain.

“What’s up?”

“I’m sorry to ask this after your patrol, but there is a...situation I need your help with,” Captain says. Siren becomes worried at the tone and is quick to change his demeanor to one of professionalism.

“What are the details?”

“Not here,” she responds and glances around the lobby where a few civilians were milling about, some even looking their way with camera’s held up to take a picture.

“Meeting room?” She nods.

The ride in the elevator is silent, Siren tapping out his nerves on the side of his leg. The high pitched ding sounds with every floor passed and the elevator music played was slightly more annoying than usual. The door opens with another ding and Captain leads them to a meeting room. She shuts the door and Siren waits for her to begin.

She takes a deep breath before shaking her head and gesturing to the chairs. “Let’s sit.” Well shit, this must be really bad. Once they’re seated she lets out another breath and starts. “Okay. There is a warehouse in Lower L’Manburg that we got a call about.” Lower L’Manburg? Hopefully Tommy wasn’t nearby. “The caller said it smelled like something was rotting inside and the police went in to check it out. They found bodies, Siren, a *lot* of bodies. They can’t even get an accurate count because of how many were in pieces.

“Oh gods,” Siren breathes. In *pieces*? He barely remembers the last time there’s been a crime on this scale. Most likely it was Jester’s debut, that no one can prove was him in court, when he burned down a street a couple years ago. Nothing’s come closer scale wise since.

“Wouldn’t Blade be your first choice for a case like this?”

“Yes and he is being put on it as well, but some of the bodies found matched the MO of the group you arrested a couple weeks ago.”

“The ones arrested with Stand Still?”

She nods, “Not all of them, but definitely the majority. We figured you were the most familiar with them. Before they died at least.”

He shakes his head, “I don’t know any more than you do.”

“Yes, but you fought them. We don’t have much to go on Wilbur, this is the closest thing we have to a lead. Are you willing to take the case? I understand if you don’t want to.”

“I’ll do it,” he says. “Who else is on the case?”

“Totem and Morph as of right now,” Captain answers. “We’re debating adding Flare on too since he and Morph prefer to work together and they have experience working on long term cases.”

Siren nods, "Sounds like a plan. When are we heading out?"

"Half an hour," she answers.

"Got it." Captain's phone rings and he gestures that he's going to leave while she accepts the call. She mouths a quick thank you before turning her attention to the call.

"And what of-" Captain says in a stern voice as he slips out of the room to head for the elevator. His eyelids were falling closed from a long night of patrol and his limbs ached, but he had a case to get to and he'd be damned if he didn't get some coffee in his system before helping investigate a crime scene. Gods, he doesn't get enough sleep to deal with this.

"Where are you going in such a rush?" Phil asks, smiling behind his own cup of coffee. Bastard, all smug because he's a daylight hero and has a decent sleep schedule. Siren of course ignores the fact that he's the one who chose to be a nightlight hero. Who in their right mind thought 'nightlight' would be a good term for heroes that work at night anyway? He just wants to talk.

"Techno and I got put on a murder case," Siren responds, more than a little tired, and presses the button on the coffee machine to give him the only thing that'll stop him from passing out from exhaustion. "Captain thinks it's linked to those guys who died in prison."

"The ones that worked with Stand Still?"

"Yup," he says, taking a sip of his precious coffee. He sighs at the warmth as it pushes away the tiredness creeping at the edge of his being. Gods, he loves coffee.

"Good luck, Wilbur. And stay safe, that's not a request," Phil jest, finger wagging in Siren's direction. Siren laughs and waves him off.

"Yeah, yeah old man."

"I'm not old!" Phil cries.

"Just an old, old man. Careful or you might just turn to dust one of these days."

"Oh, you little shit," Phil sighs in disappointment as Siren laughs.

"I should be heading out now," Siren says after his laughter finally stopped. "It shouldn't take more than a few hours. Hopefully."

"Alright mate," Phil nods. "No patrolling tonight."

"What? Why-"

"Because you worked all night last night and now you're getting called out, at the time you're usually sleeping, to work on a murder case. You're taking the night off."

"Fine," Siren whines. Phil ruffles his hair, Siren scowling as he fixes it. Phil laughs as Siren grumbles to himself the whole way to the elevator. "Bye Phil!"

“Bye Wilbur!”

Siren leans against the back wall of the elevator as it descends, arms crossed and foot flat against the wall, watching as the number slowly fades from one to another, an accompanying beep with each number change. It feels like years passed when he finally reaches the bottom, blinking slowly as he takes another gulp from his coffee and waits for the caffeine to kick in and wash away the exhaustion pulling on his eyelids. “Why did I ever think being a night hero was a good idea,” he mutters and pushes off the wall as the doors open, letting him into the lobby.

When he arrives Blade and Totem are already there.

“Took you long enough,” Totem teases.

“You try running on three hours of sleep,” Siren mutters and downs the rest of his coffee.

Blade rolls his eyes, “If you stopped waking up early to go to Niki’s maybe you’d get more sleep.” Siren glares and opens his mouth to retort, but is cut off as a loud voice announces his arrival.

“Morph has arrived!” Morph exclaims walking over with Flare in tow, wide smile on his face.

“Quackity!” Wilbur answers in a high pitched voice, the coffee finally starting to do its job.

“Wilbur,” Morph responds and they both start laughing.

“So where are we going? Captain had somewhere to be so we didn’t get all the information,” Flare explains.

“Warehouse in Lower L’Manburg,” Blade answers.

“Murder case,” Siren adds. “She thinks it might be linked to the Stand Still case.”

Totem whistles, “That can’t be good.”

“From what I’ve been told, it’s a bloodbath,” Siren answers.

“What are so many of us being put on the case?” Flare asks.

“Just the fact that there’s a hero on the case must mean it’s bad,” Totem says.

“Or it’s abnormal,” Blade adds.

“Something tells me it’s both,” Siren mutters and crushes his empty cup before tossing it in a nearby can.

Morph snaps his fingers, “Like that alley way blade case!”

“Exactly,” Blade answers.

“Captain said they couldn’t get an accurate body count,” Siren adds. “There were too many pieces to make a guess without moving the bodies.”

“Nevermind, this makes complete sense now,” Flare says, face pale at the thought.

“Are we going to loiter around all day or are we going to actually leave?” Blade huffs.

“Chill Blade,” Morph teases lightheartedly, Flare’s shaky hand intertwined with his. “Do you know how to relax?”

“We’re on duty for what sounds like a brutal murder case,” Blade deapans. “Hardly seems like the time for relaxing.”

“Touché,” Morph shrugs. “Lead the way Blade.” Siren holds back a snort, not well if the glare from Blade is anything to go by, and they walk over to the garage to grab a car to take them to the scene.

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Captain wasn’t kidding when she said it was brutal. They weren’t even at the building yet and he could already feel the stench of rotten corpses filling his nose. He scowls and holds his sleeve over his nose. It did little to help.

“Lady Death almighty, how long has this been here, gods above,” he grumbles, gagging every few words. “There’s no way no one smelled this sooner.” Flare nods along, head wobbling woozily and leaning heavily on Morph as he struggles to hold in his breakfast.

The car pulls up and the smell only gets stronger when they step out of the car. A policeman wearing a gas mask walks up and gestures for a couple other policemen to hand out spares to the arriving heroes. Siren gratefully slips his over his face and breathes in with a sigh of relief, the smell of rot replaced with something floral that bordered on overly sweet. He’d take it. Anything’s better than rot mixed with the fish and salt smell from the nearby ocean. The water isn’t close enough to see from where they are, but it was enough that you could smell it in the air.

Blade struggled for a moment before deciding to take off the boar mask and put the gas mask on in its place, making sure no one saw his face during the switch, and attaches the boar mask to hang from his belt for the time being,

“We estimate about six bodies placed at about twelve hours old,” the first policeman informs once all the masks have been handed out.

“And the rest?” Blade questions, walking towards the front door, the policeman falling into step beside him.

“They all seem to be from different time frames,” the policeman continues. “Some are completely rotten on the inside while others are estimated to be just over a few days old. From what we can tell, all of the older bodies have oddly colored blood though we aren’t sure.”

“Oddly colored how?” Flare cuts in.

“The blood appears to be more black than red.”

“Right, let’s get this over with then,” Siren announces and steps past the policeman and ducks under the police tape. People scatter out of his way and the other heroes are quick to follow his lead into the warehouse, trench coat billowing in the wind behind him. The smell only gets stronger after he opens the door to the point where the barest hint of it slipped past the filters of the mask. He scowls again, finally getting a good look at the scene, and immediately runs to empty his breakfast in the bushes, mask pulled out of the way just in time.

“Oh fuck,” Morph mutters as Flare runs over to join Siren in the bushes.

“Seems like an appropriate reaction,” Totem’s faint voice agrees as he continues to walk past the two hunched over their last meals. Wilbur rises up and wipes his face with a shaky hand before pulling his mask back over his face and begrudgingly walks back into the warehouse. He has a job to do.

“How was the building found?” Blade asks the officer.

“The front doors were bound with chains and the upper window was open with footsteps leading towards it. We assume it was used as the entrance and exit of the warehouse.”

“Show me.” The policeman leads Blade to the back of the building following a path of footsteps in the blood to a set of creaky wooden stairs. At one point the footsteps looked smeared like someone slipped, but could someone that incompetent do something like this? The two disappear for a moment before reappearing on the second floor where Blade begins inspecting a window.

“Captain wasn’t kidding,” Totem says, shifting from one foot to another.

“Yeah,” Siren rasps before clearing his throat. Totem’s still pretty new. He forgets that sometimes. He was still a rookie during the whole Jester incident and he wouldn’t have been told any of the gory details since he was still technically in training. Not to mention he didn’t even start training until after Jester’s debut.

“You’ve uh, you’ve been on cases like this before?” he asks.

“Not like this,” he answers with a shake of his head.

Flare wipes off his mouth and stumbles his way over to Morph with his mask tightened firmly over his face. If this sucks for him he can’t imagine how bad it is for Flare. Demon hybrids have a really strong sense of smell.

“The police finished their inspection and took all the photographs they need,” Blade says by way of greeting as he returns. “We’re free to change what we need to.”

Siren nods and Blade turns towards the scene. Everyone steps back as a faint aura of red surrounds him and blood begins to rise from the ground.

“Totem.” No other cue is needed from his brother for Totem to place his hand on Blade’s shoulder, his hand glowing gold as Blade’s power increases. With one final exhale the bodies begin to rise off the floor, the blood following as it drifts towards the body it’s from, a macabre scene of corpses reassembling themselves midair. Arms flying through the air towards their matching torso’s, scattered intestines floating around their respective bodies. It was grotesque and Siren almost wanted to run back to the bushes, but it was also beautiful in a morbid, horrific sort of way. Blood swirling in the air almost in a dance as it traveled.

“There,” Blade huffs as all the limbs match up with their bodies. Small outlines or red light remain circling stains on the floor where blood and corpses sat. Everything moved but the odd darker-than-blood blood. “Get the photo guys in here.”

“Got it.” Morph runs out the doors and a minute later returns with a team of forensic photographers. They hurry around, taking pictures of the stains on the floor and the bodies in the air. The second they were done more people filed in and placed large plastic sheets on the floor for Blade to set the bodies on. The second the last person steps back Blade lowers the bodies down, careful not to let anything fall off the plastic. He makes sure everything is lined up how it was in the air before letting go. He falls to one knee and takes deep, heavy breaths. Siren is by his side in an instant, Flare and Morph running over to check on Totem.

“Are you alright?” Siren asks, worry coating his tone.

“M’fine,” Blade huffs. “Took a lot.”

“Let’s get you somewhere to rest,” Siren says and takes his brother’s arm over his shoulders. He helps him outside and sits him down in the grass where it’s a little harder to smell the rot. Siren snaps at a passing intern to get their attention as Blade gets settled. “Get me a bottle of cold water, now.” They nod quickly and scurry away to fulfill his request.

“You’re overreacting,” Blade huffs.

“Stand up then. On your own.” Blade glares, but doesn’t move. “Told you.”

“Yeah, yeah. It’s just a little power exhaustion, no big deal,” Blade mutters, letting himself fall back, arms stretching behind him to support himself. The intern returns with water and Blade removes the gas mask, scowling at the smell, before downing the bottle. Thankfully they were far enough away that no one would be able to see his face.

“Better?” Siren asks.

“Good enough,” Blade responds and pushes himself up, gas mask replaced firmly over his face, standing beside Siren.

“Totem’s alright,” Flare informs, walking over from where Morph and Totem sat a few feet away. “Took a lot out of him.”

“Good, let’s finish this up and go home, yeah,” Siren grins and glances back towards the warehouse. The smile instantly drops as he catches sight of the bodies through the doors and the people trying to find their identities. It really is horrible. He counted six bodies with



normal blood, the ones that died within the last day, and thirteen with black blood. Those one's smelled the worst.

"Are there any cameras in the area?" Morph asks, walking over with Totem in tow.

"There was one, but it was too staticy to show much of anything," a policeman who followed them answered. "It's being processed right now. It'll be sent over to the hero tower in a day or two for review."

"Thanks," Siren nods, eyes trained on the bodies as the policeman nods and talks to Blade for a moment, before walking over to join another group of people. He could definitely see the connection to the Stand Still case. He looked over the files countless times and had them practically memorized at this point. He doesn't think the most recent six are connected, not significantly at least, but the other thirteen are definitely connected. There was no mistaking it. The black blood? That fact that it's thicker than it should be? The smell? All of it went right back to the Stand Still case. "Captain was onto something. These are a definite match to the Stand Still case."

"I see it too," Totem agrees. "The blood is identical."

"Not to mention the decomposition," Blade agrees. "According to the reports the men arrested with Stand Still were noted to have advanced decomposition rates. Their organs were almost completely decomposed while the skin was untouched. These match." He waves a hand in the direction of the corpses. "Though, it wasn't blood. Not completely anyway. I'd say it was mixed with something. A poison maybe? Or a power effect maybe?"

"I can't tell if this is a good thing or a very, *very* bad thing," Totem sighs.

"I'm leaning towards bad," Morph mutters.

"Who would even do something like this," Flare mutters, grief and anger dripping from his voice and Morph is quick to wrap him in a hug, Flare happily squeezing him back.

"I'm guessing a group of people," Blade says. People flurried around the corpses in the background as the heroes spoke. "There's a good deal of water in the building. Too much to be from a spill, the pipes haven't had water in them in years and it hasn't rained in the last few weeks. Someone most likely had a water or ice power and used it in defense or offense. A few of the bodies had what I believe to be defensive wounds as well. They put up a fight, but from what I can tell most didn't get the chance before they were downed."

Questions spun through Siren's head and he struggled to find the answers, but each time he felt close they would spin just out of reach. Something big is going down and he doesn't know if they're prepared to handle it.

"I'm getting some air," Flare mutters and brushes past Morph to walk down the street, probably to find some criminals to get into a fight with, his fiancé following behind a second later. They disappear down a side street just as Morph catches up. Totem says something about taking a break as well, but Siren pays it no mind. He has a crime scene to inspect.

## Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the late chapter! I injured my hand and couldn't type for a bit, but I'm all good now so we should be back on schedule for next week :)

Also! The off-shoot story should be posted within the next day so if you feel like reading about Tommy's shenanigans in a new universe feel free to check it out :)

# Chapter Twelve

## Chapter Summary

Niki thinks back on the past month and gets a call.

## Chapter Notes

Tw's:

Panic attack, referenced death/violence

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

A few weeks ago, if you told Niki that the random teenager that wandered into her shop looking around like everything he saw was something new would become someone she deeply cared about she probably would have ignored you. She'll admit she's quick to care about people, but a total stranger just because he visited the cafe? She just couldn't see something like that happening. And yet somehow it did.

A blonde teen, no older than seventeen or eighteen at most, walks in and right away she could tell there was something different about him. The first thing she noticed was the scars. They were hidden under long sleeves and a high neckline, but that didn't stop her eyes from falling to the obvious burns on his hands and on the side of his neck. Nor the scarred over knuckles you can only get from punching something enough for them to split and heal over and over again.

The second thing she noticed were his eyes. They were older than a child's had any right to be. He looked at her the same way she's seen veteran heroes brought down by injuries look at the world. He looked at her with pain and longing and fear and grief that spoke of hardship and trials none should need to face that made her want to whisk him away to somewhere he wouldn't have to deal with such hurt any longer, a swear on her lips to take care of whoever thought it was okay to hurt a child should she ever find them.

She did not, in fact, steal him away from his pain. How does one even go about taking away someone's pain anyway? All she knows how to do is share in it. Instead she smiled and hoped to make him feel safe. Her cafe is her safe haven and she's always hoped others could feel the same way about it. The perfect escape from the crushing weight of expectations.

When he approached the counter she had planned to ask if he was alright, the pain too fresh to be anything but recent, but before she could he'd plastered a smile on his face and loudly traveled the final few feet to where she stood. He acted like nothing was wrong, like there

wasn't a single thing out of place in the world even as he himself seemed to stick out. She didn't need to use her power to see there was something very, very wrong.

Then he handed her the money for his food and walked to his seat all the way in the back, never once turning his back fully to the door, observing it like a hawk from his new seat. Something so normal, so mundane. Something everyone does, to some degree, but all the while, she was frozen. Body stiff as the emotions tied to that little piece of paper seeped into her hands and tunneled into her brain and speared through her heart. Something so small didn't deserve to hold so much. An ocean of grief held in the palm of her hand, the loss greeting her like an old friend and wrapping around her heart as if holding it hostage. Her eyes burning with the sudden need to cry and her throat scratchy with the need to scream out her anger and pain that consumed her in waves.

She could barely remember the last time she had felt such strong negative emotions, years surely. Such sadness and loss and loneliness tied to such a small piece of paper. And the anger, buried beneath the rest and shoved out of the way, the pain, prevalent and strong. What was worse, so much worse, was the hope. The feeble thing clinging to the surface like a person struggling not to drown in the harsh waves of the ocean even as they shoved them under and dragged them down like a vengeful wraith.

She had never dropped something so fast as she did that money. She couldn't bear feeling so much for even a moment longer. She could practically see the emotions curling up from the paper. She shoved the money into the nearest drawer as fast as she could, locking it firmly out of sight, but regrettably, not out of mind.

Even so, once the money was hidden away it felt as if a weight had been lifted and breathing came easier as her own emotions returned to the forefront of her mind, but the feelings still lingered at the edge. She hastily slipped on a pair of gloves she kept on hand for time such as these, greedily absorbing the *calm* that radiated from them, and put together another plate.

The boy was scarfing down his food like a starving man, not before inspecting it like it could be poisoned of course, and she wouldn't be surprised if that were true. He seemed so happy to be eating the pastry even as he stared it down like it was some unknown relic from a forgotten time. Even the hot chocolate seemed foreign to him with the way he cautiously took the first sip before gulping it down in a way that seemed painful. The thought alone threw Niki for a loop. How could he not have tried hot chocolate before?

She gave him the plate and cup, happy to see that he was enjoying the meal, and he seemed grateful if not confused as he accepted, as though the thought of someone being kind to him was strange and unexpected. It broke her heart to see someone so young so cautious.

She knew he was watching her as she worked. His eyes followed her every move when she wasn't looking, something she's sure she wasn't meant to know with how fast he'd look away every time she turned around. She ignored it the best she could and went about her day as if nothing was wrong and then an hour after he arrived, he left.

At first she couldn't help but worry. Did he have somewhere to go? Someone to take care of him? Is he going home or somewhere else? Will he come back? She was afraid to never see the strange teen again.

Then the next day arrived and he was there. He walked in around lunch time for a hot chocolate and pastry, same as the day before, and left. Then he returned again, this time saying more than the few words it took to order, then left. Then again and again and again. He came back every single day, each time spending more time talking with her about his day and his work and anything that seemed to cross his mind, and each day she learned more and knew less. For every answer she got there were three more questions to ask.

Tommy became a mystery, a puzzle she struggled to solve with half the pieces missing and the other half refusing to fit together. The emotions he left behind on his money being the biggest, brightest piece with nothing to connect it to. It was her least favorite piece. No matter how many times she denied his money he'd always find some way to leave it behind for her. He'd drop it in the tip jar or leave it on the counter or stick it on top of the register or sometimes even put it directly in her hands if the opportunity arose. She wished he wouldn't.

Please don't make her feel that again.

She's taken to putting on a pair of gloves to retrieve the money when she can without him seeing and puts it away with the rest in the register so its emotions become muddled and dull, mollified from the pollution of so many other people's emotions trapped together in such a small place.

Then Wilbur showed up and she took it as the perfect opportunity to introduce them thinking maybe he would make a friend, well aware at this point he had no others besides his boss, and hoped that he could find someone to trust and confide in. Even if it wasn't her he decided to trust at least there would be somebody and that was good enough for her.

When Tommy saw Wilbur she feared those hopes were already dead as that same look appeared in his eyes. Grief and longing and anger and pain and every other thing in between. The look was gone before she could make any true sense of it, more aware of it now that she could say that she knew him on at least some level.

At first, like she feared, Tommy didn't seem to like Wilbur, that or he just felt awkward, but she couldn't help her smile when they started getting along. She would have thought they'd always been friends with how they acted, the rough patch passed over and forgotten almost quick enough for her to miss. Wilbur started showing up for lunch just to hang out with Tommy, cutting into his time to sleep just to be there, and Tommy seemed so happy every time he did, even if he hid it behind good natured cursing and insults. She could tell he was happier. The money he handed her would sing of happiness, hope, content, amongst the waves of sorrow and longing and pain. It was a good start.

Niki was excited to introduce Tommy to Puffy. She's her best friend, and has been for most of her life. Childhood friends to best friends turned hero partners. She may not technically be a hero at the moment, but they've remained close as ever. She was there through every bad day and every injury, big or small, just as Puffy was for her. Through the adoption of Puffy's kids, whom she thought of as family right alongside Puffy, and their hero training, even helping train them at times. Puffy loves meeting new people and she just knew she would love Tommy and hoped he would like her too.

Honestly she should have expected his reaction by now.

The same look in his eyes, again and again it appeared, every time he met someone new it seemed. That look of longing and sorrow, but it wasn't as bad as it was with her and Wilbur. It was softer, not the same overwhelming emotions she saw the other times.

He didn't seem to dislike Puffy at first glance and they seemed to become fast friends which made her happy. She's always glad when people she cares about get along. Though she still wonders why he called her Captain Puffy since Wilbur confirmed he doesn't know Puffy is Captain. There's always the chance he was lying, but there's no real way to know for sure unless Puffy used her power on him which she's sure there's little chance of him agreeing too and Puffy wouldn't use her power on a civilian without permission. Either way, he's making progress. He was happier and more at ease around strangers. Things were looking up.

Then he met Techno and it happened all over again only worse. Pain, grief, longing, *fear*. He was so afraid. Not once did he seem comfortable around him and even when he seemed calmer she could tell he was still one wrong move from making a run for it. He left earlier than usual and that was that.

Her and Wilbur chatted for a bit on the phone later, about what had happened that day with Tommy, the man still downtrodden with guilt. Niki spent a good while comforting him and doing her best to ease his guilt, pointing out things that went well. He didn't run. There was still a chance that if given proper warning he might be open to meeting him again. No, he didn't ruin their friendship. Yes, she's sure he'll forgive him. He had a tough choice to make and he did his best. The only thing to do was move on and hope for the best. She did advise him to apologize, but she's sure he was planning to do that anyway.

It was a shock when he showed up to breakfast the next morning asking for coffee, she would have been surprised if he showed up at all let alone so early, especially since he'd never been there so early before. She didn't take him as the type to drink coffee since he never ordered it, but in hindsight it made sense. There's no way someone could function with eyebags as dark as his without some sort of caffeine in their system. Even if it did seem like he had no clue what it was. On second thought, maybe not. How does he stay awake without coffee?

Not only was the visit weird for the time of day there was also how he was acting. It wasn't a bad thing per say, honestly it was more a good thing than anything else, it was just different. He seemed less tense, almost like a weight had been lifted off his shoulders and he finally found a way to relax, but at the same time like he was ignoring something important. His smile seemed to come easy and he was brighter somehow. She's just glad he found something to help him. Who knows, maybe he even opened up to someone. Was it Wilbur? She'll have to ask if Tommy got a visit from Siren last night. Though if she did she's sure Wilbur's will walk in all bubbly over Tommy having confided in him despite his earlier guilt.

Niki's phone rings and she startles out of her thoughts, blinking a few times to gather her bearings. She smacks her hands together to knock off the excess flour and accepts the call on speaker, leaving it off to the side as she returns to kneading dough.

"Puffy? What's up?" She smiles as the call connects, hearing her friend shuffling around on the other line, and adds a little extra water to the dough. It's too crumbly.

“I’m sorry.”

Two simple words that give Niki pause, hands freezing mid motion pushing the dough. She didn’t need any context to know exactly what Puffy was going to ask of her. She couldn’t help the shake in her hands as she wiped them against the front of her apron. She swallows thickly and does her best to focus on Puffy’s words. Those damning words.

“I wouldn’t ask if I didn’t think it was important.” She could hear the woman pacing on the other side of the phone, no doubt just as upset to have to ask as Niki is to hear it.

“I know,” Niki reassures softly, practically a whisper, voice resigned. She grabs her hands together in front of her to stop the tremors shaking up and down her arms. She should have known this peace wouldn’t last. It was stupid really, to think that she could truly be done with it all.

“You can say no,” Puffy responds, voice matching Niki’s. “You don’t have to do it.”

“Yes I do,” Niki responds, voice just as soft and only slightly shaky. “You know I do.” Her help could mean the difference between people living or dying, of course she’s going to do it. So what if even the thought makes her want to curl up in a corner and hide until her every woe disappears. She just has to push through. For the sake of those who need her. “Give me the address.” Puffy rattles off some address in Lower L’Manburg, close enough to the border you’d likely be able to see Pogtopia in the distance if you try hard enough, and Niki copies it onto a spare napkin in shaky handwriting, smears of dough rubbing off onto the thin paper.

“Niki, you really don’t have to do this,” Puffy repeats. “I don’t want you to push yourself. You’re finally starting to do better.” The last bit was almost too quiet for the pink haired woman to hear and even still it eased her shaking to hear the obvious care for her wellbeing.

“Thanks Puffy,” Niki responds, smiling ever so slightly before taking a moment to steady her voice before continuing. “I’ll be there soon.” She hands up the phone and after a few moments of still silence she falls into a nearby chair. She drops her head into her hands and takes deep breaths as she does her best to hold back the tears.

“It’s alright,” she whispers. “Everything’s going to be okay. You’ve done it before you can do it again.” The words do little to console the woman and she’s left to carefully go through the steps to calm herself down. In for four seconds, hold for seven, release for eight, repeat. In, hold, out, repeat. In, hold, out, repeat. It’s ten minutes later when she finally deems herself calm enough to force herself to her feet.

With regret weighing heavy on her heart she closes the cafe, begrudgingly telling guests she was closing early due to a family emergency and locking up. She drives to the Hero Tower, hands holding the wheel with a white-knuckled grip, in complete silence. When she arrives after what feels like years she stops to take a few deep breaths before gathering her things and walking into the building.

Getting in is the easy part. She’s been in and out of the tower for meetings since she went on medical leave countless times, but only as an observer. She hasn’t actually worn her costume in almost two years. She was once Empath, a mighty hero working side by side with the

Captain, famed for her skill in calming victims and suspect profiling in prolonged cases. One of the few heroes on constant call by the police force for crime scenes, primarily murder cases. Now she's barely a husk of what she once was. She hasn't so much as touched hero work since her breakdown.

She should have known she wouldn't be able to leave it behind for good.

It wasn't even that she hated hero work, she loved being able to help people and save them from all kinds of situations. Just seeing people's smiles as they were reunited with loved ones and the teary eyed thanks she'd received were enough to make it all worth it. The rest was what she couldn't deal with.

Once upon a time, she loved her power. It wasn't the most powerful one she knew of, not by a long shot, but it was hers and she couldn't think of anything else she would want. She loved feeling the wide variety of emotions people felt, the good and the bad, and while it could get overwhelming sometimes her love for her ability never faltered through her youth.

Unfortunately, as she learned with time, even the best of feelings sour eventually and she was no exception. She'd come to hate her ability, seeing it as a curse for the pain it's brought with it, and would do away with it if she could, but she can't so she's here. Back where she's come to realize she never wanted to be again.

She reaches her floor, still clean despite the years it's sat untouched, and finds her suit in pristine condition, not a speck of dust to tarnish the memories it carries. She dresses, a nostalgic sort of feeling almost pushing aside the rest as she does, and does her best not to think about what she's about to do. When she's done she takes a moment to pause and focus on her breathing, getting used to the feeling of being in her suit again, hastily gripping whatever calm she can find and wrapping it around her heart. Now this is where the hard part begins.

As she waits for the elevator to reach the lobby her foot taps and her fingers fidget, but she does her best to look calm and confident as the doors open. She walks into the lobby, pastel hero suit standing out amongst the sea of business wear, people turning their heads to her in shock, murmurs breaking through her haze of determination and wiggling their way into her brain.

"Is she back from medical leave?"

"Couldn't be, not after what happened."

"I was sure she retired."

"Wow, she's actually back."

Why couldn't she have gone wearing her apron, flour stains and all? Hell she would even wear a bowl of dough on her head over this. The suit felt suffocating. Every breath she took brought her closer to walking right back into the elevator and burning the fucking thing. Despite the thoughts running circles in her brain she held her head high and walked through the crowd of office workers anxious to catch a peak of the infamous Empath.



She takes a company car to the address and with one last unsteady breath she shoves aside her unease and steps out of the car.

“Niki?” Siren is the first to spot her and Niki has to stop herself from shrinking away. She doesn’t want to be here. She doesn’t have a choice. If it means saving lives, she’ll do it, but that doesn’t mean she has to be happy about it. Focus on the people she’s saving. That’s all she has to do. Focus on that and she can make it through this. “What are you doing here?” He didn’t need to ask. He already knows the answer. “Are you sure-”

“I’m here Siren,” she cuts him off. If another person asks if she’s sure she’ll end up turning back. She knows she will and she *has* to do this. She’s come too far to turn back now. “I’m doing my job.” Her words fell short of the confidence she was aiming for and she knows he can tell. Why didn’t she just quit when she had the chance? Curse her constant need to be helpful.

Wilbur can tell she doesn’t want to be there, he always knows, but he doesn’t call her out on it. He knows just as well as she does how important it is that she does this. He only nods and steps to the side.

She walks past the group of heroes, each watching her closely as she passes, and steps up to the door. The smell was awful, even after the bodies had been removed, but that wasn’t what made her hesitate as she reached for the handle. Already the emotions radiated from the building, even before entering. So many different emotions clashing and invading her senses, each one another reason to run back to the car and hide away from everything, getting behind the wheel and driving far, *far*, away, but she couldn’t. She has a job to do. There are people who need her help and she can’t handle letting them down again.

She pushes the door open, with more force than probably necessary, and immediately stumbles back. She hates this. This is why she didn’t want to come back. All the emotions played with her mind and chipped away at her bit by bit. She never should have come back. What was she thinking? Things won’t change. They never will. She’s going to get stuck in the same loop all over again. She’ll get called in to some new crime investigation and be asked to figure out what everyone was feeling and she’ll have to feel *every single one*. It’s so much worse when she doesn’t even have to touch something to feel the emotions. This is so much worse. It’s everywhere, she can’t escape, there’s no way out-

A hand rests on her shoulder, worried and sad and calm drifting into her mind, and she turns her head to see Siren, to see *Wilbur* her *friend*, smiling at her reassuringly. He gives her shoulder a light squeeze and she rests her hand over his, returning a sad smile. He over exaggerates taking a large breath, holds it for a second, then slowly releases it. She follows along until she’s calmed down and doesn’t feel her legs shaking, threatening to collapse under her. She can do this.

With heavy limbs she forces herself to take one step after another into the building until she stands at the edge of a maze of white chalk and blood stains, a table a foot or so to her side. Shakily she removes a glove and tucks it into a pocket on her belt, fingers flexing in and out to ease her nerves. It’s a small relief that the bodies aren’t still there. The emotions are always stronger when they’re around. Wilbur and the others stand behind her and by the door respectively and she takes another deep breath to center herself. She has her friends here to

support her, people she trusts and cares about to keep her grounded. Just her and her coworkers, her friends, her *family* in the warehouse. She can do this.

She takes a deep breath in and when she releases it she throws out her hand before she can overthink it and places her hand on the table, immediately stumbling back into Wilbur. He wraps his arms around her, keeping her upright and off the blood stained ground, as she struggles to sort through everything flowing into her at once.

Fear, anger, hatred, *excitement*, fear, horror, longing, loss, anger, *amusement*, fear, freedom, pride, horror, hope, anger, and fear fear **fear**-

“Niki? Niki, can you hear me?” A voice speaks clearly in front of her and she narrows in on it. It’s Techno. He’s kneeling in front of her to be closer to her level and look her in the eyes. “Niki, are you alright?” he repeats slowly.

She blinks the tears out of her eyes and shakes her head, hands coming up to brace the sides of it as the conflicting emotions roil through her. She’s so angry and afraid and hateful and prideful and horrified and afraid afraid afraid. She can feel so much and her emotions blend in with those of others, just barely winning out over the foreign feelings. “No, I’m- no. Oh *gods*,” she chokes on a sob, hand flying to cover her mouth. This is so much worse than she remembers. Whether it’s because she’s out of practice or this is just that horrible she doesn’t know. “There’s just so *much*,” she sobs, pressing closer to Wilbur who stands behind her in support, calm and worried and care. His arms wrap tighter and she focuses on the feeling ignoring the **fear** wrapping around her heart and taking up residence.

“It’s so horrible,” her voice shakes and she doesn’t need to see the others to tell they’re unsettled by her reaction. She’s so afraid. She has to run. She’s not going to make it- This isn’t her emotion. Push it away, it’s not hers. She’s not in danger.

She could feel the eyes of her fellow heroes on her even and she used their presence to ground her. Totem was still in training when she took leave, nearing the end of it but still a bit left to go, and she never worked extensively with Flare and Morph in the field before. So it made sense that they would stare. Regardless, it’s not everyday she’s pushed to sobbing from emotions. Last time she lost control like this she took a two year long leave. This isn’t like last time. She’s just out of practice. And last time she cried for herself. This time she’s crying for them, because she feels as though she is them. She’s crying for the fear she knows they felt as their lives were cut short. Gods, she must really be out of practice, this isn’t even the worst of the fear she’s felt. They put up a fight, she can tell, even if it was, for the most part, a hopeless one. So why is she reacting like this? Is it how angry the killer felt? Or that mystery being watching and feeling emotions in a way she wasn’t used to? Those emotions feel the worst she decides. All encompassing and ancient in a way that makes you feel small and powerless in their presence.

What was odd was the victims weren’t the only ones who were scared. The killer was too. They were almost as scared as the people who they killed but it was hidden under all the anger and pride and at some point even *joy*. Why would someone who killed so easily and mercilessly be scared?

“They were so afraid,” she smiles, a laugh bubbling at her lips. “They all died so easily. They didn’t stand a chance.” Her smile widens and she opens her mouth to continue speaking about how proud she is to have won and how happy she is, but forces it shut with a click. Not hers, separate it. She is not prideful or happy, that’s the killer she’s feeling. She really needs to get away from here. As soon as possible.

“Let’s get you out of here,” Wilbur whispers and she nods weakly, mouth clamped shut even as tears continue to fall. She has trouble trying to figure out if they’re her’s or if they’re the result of someone else’s emotions. “Can you walk?” She shakes her head, a small action fueled by the need to give an answer rather than try to rid the thoughts and feelings from her mind. “Techno?”

There’s no response as she’s taken into careful arms and lifted from the ground. She continues to flip through emotions as she’s brought into fresh air and away from the hell building behind them. She builds a mental wall between her emotions and the one’s from the building, blocking out the emotions threatening to drown her as she picks them apart and sorts them to where they belong, and pulls on her glove, ensuring they are covering every part of her hands. The foreign emotions begin to inch away from her own and she shoves them along their path, they cling to her like a child to a parent, but eventually she’s able to easily find the difference between her emotions and those of others.

She’s placed in the shade of a tree and Wilbur sits beside her, arms open for a hug. She doesn’t hesitate to throw herself into it, clinging to the comfort of his familiar emotions in the midst of her panic. Calm and care and worry.

A hand rubs up and down her arm, slowly bringing her tears to a stop, and soft humming echoes from the man she calls her friend. The others were off somewhere letting her calm down in relative privacy and she was left with Wilbur to slowly, ever so slowly, separate her emotions from the final remains of the foreign ones. This was decidedly one of the worst parts of using her power to its full extent. Prying apart each emotion and trying to figure out what was her and what wasn’t. She *really* hates this.

After a long period of silence Wilbur speaks up. “Do you want me to call Puffy?” Does she? Puffy would know how to help her best, they were a team after all, but does she really want to do that to her? She wouldn’t be here if Puffy hadn’t asked her to be and she knows how guilty she would feel, how she already feels no doubt. No, she doesn’t want to do that to her.

She shakes her head, hair falling into her face, and pulls away from the hug. “I don’t want to worry her.”

“She’s going to worry either way,” Wilbur responds, laughing weakly at his poor attempt at a joke.

“She will, won’t she?” Niki sighs. “I’ll tell her what happened later.” And if she decides to leave out the finer detail then that’s for her to know. Wilbur nods.

He hesitates for a moment. “Are you feeling up to talking? We couldn’t really understand what you were trying to say earlier.” Right, she did this for a reason. Time to do her job and relay the information. She’s just glad Wilbur and Techno have helped her with cases like this

before and are used to her temporarily taking on the emotions of others. She's been told it can be unsettling to watch. Especially when the emotions are particularly conflicting.

"Yeah," she answers. "I'm fine."

"That's debatable."

She snorts and shoves his shoulder. "Oh, shut up."

"Niki, how could you?" Wilbur holds his shoulder like he's been injured, his other hand dramatically held against his forehead. "I'm being assaulted."

"Pog." Techno says and plops down criss-crossed on the grass on her right. "Kill him Niki. No one will miss him anyway."

"Techno!" Wilbur whines. Techno only shrugs. Niki laughs at the interaction feeling lighter than she did a moment before and the rest of the group takes that as an okay to join them.

"So what happened?" Foolish asks hesitantly, voice uneasy. "It didn't look good."

Niki shakes her head, "Not good news that's for sure."

"Well fuck," Sapnap mutters and Quackity elbows him making him glare at his fiancé.

"The killer was angry, very angry," she starts. "But they were also scared. It wasn't obvious, it was overtaken by all their anger and hatred, but it was there and it was stronger than you'd expect, but then it changed. The fear was sort of left behind and you could tell they were having fun with it. There was also a sense of longing like they missed it and pride over a victory. I don't know if it was the fighting or the killing, but either way, they were having fun and that means..."

"They're likely to do it again," Techno finishes for her and she nods.

"Oh fuck indeed," Foolish agrees with a humorless laugh, apprehension in his eyes.

"Yeah," she nods. "And the people. They weren't able to fight back, not well. It was a largely hopeless battle. There was a point where they seemed hopeful, but it didn't last long and they seemed to accept that there wasn't an escape."

"I'm not getting sleep anytime soon, am I?" Wilbur groans.

"Unfortunately not," Niki sighs.

"If these people really are really as powerful as you say, none of us are getting any sleep anytime soon," Techno agrees. "Something tells me this isn't going to be a straightforward case."

Foolish shakes his head, "Minimal footage, no DNA, and no leads. They left nothing behind, not even a calling card. Not one we've been able to find at least."

“So either we’re dealing with newbies or they don’t care about how well known they are,” Sapnap deduces.

“Exactly,” Foolish agrees.

“I don’t think it was the first time they killed,” Blade voices. “Niki said they enjoyed fighting and that they missed it. That alone confirms at least a previous assault or even a murder we may or may not know about.”

“So they aren’t newbies *and* they don’t care about reputation,” Wilbur says.

Niki nods, “I think it was revenge. They were so angry and hateful towards them. That’s the only thing I think fits for why. That or they were betrayed, but betrayal is distinct enough to recognize separately and I didn’t feel any so it’s unlikely.”

“How many people do you think?” Quackity asks, the first time he’s spoken during the conversation. Usually he’s a lot more outspoken. Niki catches a look sent Quackity’s way by Sapnap, one that Quackity seemed to understand but didn’t acknowledge.

“I’m not sure,” Niki responds, “but I think it was one.” The others stare at her in shock as she struggles to explain. “Emotions are distinct. There are places where they can blend together if they’re similar enough, but if you know how to look you can differentiate between different people’s feelings. It’s not very exact, but this time it was pretty easy to tell. There was a clear divide between three groups of people. There was one killer. I couldn’t tell how many were killed because of how their emotions blended with each other. As for the third party. They weren’t a part of it, just an observer. They didn’t interfere, but they were excited about something and amused. It was like their favorite show was on after years of waiting and the main character did something they found funny. I’m not really sure how else to describe it.”

“No, that makes sense,” Wilbur says. “I think I get it.”

“It would be sad if you didn’t,” Techno speaks dryly. “Considering everyone else did.”

“Hey-!” Wilbur sputters.

“Hay is for horses.”

“Fuck you!” Wilbur lunges at Techno, attempting to tackle him to the grass, but only succeeds in falling into the dirt. Everyone laughs as Wilbur continues trying to shove Techno into the dirt, breathing heavily with the effort. “Fuck. You,” he huffs out between breaths. “Fuck, I need a minute.” He falls back into his seat from before and lays out in the grass.

“That was hilarious,” Sapnap and Quackity cackle as Foolish hides his laughter behind his hand. Wilbur just flips them off before letting his hand fall back to the ground still catching his breath.

They don’t stick around for much longer after that. Everyone goes back to their homes, let off patrols for the night and next day, to unwind after the difficult day and hopefully rest before the meeting the next day. Niki arrives home to see Puffy waiting for her, having let herself in

with the spare key, pacing back and forth, gripping and fiddling with her hands to the point where it looked like it hurt. Puffy's head snaps up at the sound of the door closing and is leading Niki to the couch before she could realize what's happening.

"What happened? Are you okay? What did you feel? Are you tired? Hungry? Wha-"

Niki chuckles, amused by her friend's antics, and grabs the sheep hybrids waving hands.

"Calm down, Puffy. I'm alright."

Puffy deflates, leaning into Niki's side, head on her shoulder. Niki doesn't hesitate to wrap her arms around her and couldn't resist running her hand through her fluffy hair. It's so soft! "I'm glad you're okay," Puffy whispers, fiddling with a bracelet on her wrist. The bracelet was old, a gift given to her by her sons on her birthday many years before, the colors were washed out and the thread was worn down and seemed ready to break, but Puffy loved it and refused to take it off even for hero work much to her sons' chagrin. "I was worried."

"It's alright, Puffy," Niki reassures her. "I'm alright."

"You'll come to me, right? If you need help? If it becomes too much again?" Puffy's pleading eyes look up at her, so different from the confidence she's known for as Captain, and Niki smiles.

"Of course."

## Chapter End Notes

I've been waiting so long to do Niki's pov It's so much fun switching povs and writing all the different ways the characters act and think.

We hit over a hundred comments! Thank you all so much for reading and for all the comments and kudos :)

# Chapter Thirteen

## Chapter Summary

Tommy gets some food.

## Chapter Notes

TWs:  
violence

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The cafe's closed. That's odd, it was open this morning. What is he supposed to do now? Tommy stares at the closed sign adorning the cafe door and tries to remember what he did before he started going to the cafe. He could go to the market again? Yeah, no. He'd probably get arrested if he went there again. He'll just eat later. His hearts aren't too low, having only just begun to dip back down again, so he'll be fine until later.

Tubburger! He'll get some food there! Later of course. Sure he hasn't been there since he went with Wilbur, but it'll be fine! It's the perfect opportunity! He'll just go in, grab a burger, make friends with Tubbo, and everything will go back to the way it's supposed to be. He's been thinking about burgers since last time too. He hasn't gotten to try one yet. The ones from Wilbur's burger van don't count, they were shit.

"You're back early," Clementine says as Tommy walks back into the shop barely ten minutes after leaving.

"Yeah, grabbed something quick today. Wilbur and Niki weren't there so I didn't see the point in sticking around," he shrugs.

"Alright dear," Clementine smiles. Back to the dress! He sits back in his chair and pulls out the dress he brought home and never worked on, ready to finally finish it. "Tommy, when is that gentleman's appointment again? The one for the suit?"

"Ah...Thursday or Friday," Tommy responds, needle between his teeth as he digs around for the right thread. "Pretty sure it's Friday." He scowls and grabs the needle out of his mouth. "Clem? Where's the green-blue color? I can't find it."

"The teal?"

“Yeah, yeah, that one,” Tommy answers. What’s with these people and their fancy names for colors? Just say what it looks like for Prime’s sake. He’s not learning all that color name shit.

“It should be on the shelf.”

Tommy looks around the shelves and finally spots it. All the way at the top. Normally, this wouldn’t be a problem for the great Tommy Innit, but he’s getting low on hearts and he’d rather not risk the fall. Even if it’s not likely for him to die falling off a shelf there’s still the slim chance he does and he’d rather Clementine not see that.

“I need to head out for a bit,” Clementine announces, grabbing her bag. “I’ll be back in an hour or two!”

“Bye, Clem!” Deliberation over, if he dies he dies, doesn’t matter now. Hopefully, if he did end up dying for some reason, like if the cabinet falls on him or something, a customer doesn’t walk in on him dying. That would be embarrassing.

So with a stupid plan in mind Tommy scales the shelves, pulling himself from one cubby to the next, slowly and steadily getting closer to the top. Why the fuck are these so tall anyway? They never even use the top half for anything other than storage. How did any of this even get up here? Clementine sure as hell didn’t put it there.

The shelves begin to sway and Tommy grips onto the wood like a lifeline until the movement stops. He lets out a sigh of relief and reaches for the next shelf only for it to wobble again and his one handed grip isn’t enough to hold him on. “Fuck!”

He tumbles to the ground and rolls away. Objects fall to the ground around him and he does his best to avoid getting hit. Spoiler alert, he fails. The exact spool he was climbing up to grab hits him in the head on its way down and he grabs it in his hand, holding it like he’s trying to strangle it. Once the moment passed, and everything that was going to fall fell, Tommy laid on the ground, breathless, as he spent the next few minutes just catching his breath.

“That was close.” It’s as he gets up that he spots the ladder sitting innocently against the wall just waiting to be used. He swears it’s laughing at him. He glares at it and out of spite he kicks it over, looks around to make sure no one saw, then scurries away.

He walks into the front room and freezes, arms out awkwardly, as a customer stares at him.

“Is everything alright?” she asks after a moment of awkward eye contact.

“Yes,” he responds, slowly, enunciating the word heavily. “How may I help you?”

“Are you sure? I heard a crash-“

“Yes,” Tommy repeats. “How may I help you?”

“Oh, um, I’m here to pick up an order?”



“Name?” Tommy sets the spool to the side and grabs the stack of orders. He really needs to figure out a better way of organizing them. Could his laptop help?

“Hannah,” she responds. He shifts through the papers and it takes a minute, but he finally finds the one he’s looking for.

“Hannah Rose, red dress with rose embroidery, one second please.” He slips back into the back room, carefully avoiding the scattered objects littered on the ground so he doesn’t fall again, and flips through hangers of clothes in garment bags. “Found it!”

He places the bag on the counter and she happily grabs it, primes placed next to the register in a neat pile.

“Thank you,” she says and walks out of the store. Now that there’s nothing to distract him he has time to clean up the back room, preferably before Clementine gets back.

He groans upon seeing the state of the room before slowly picking things up and putting them back where they belong. It takes a while, nearly an hour, and he’s tired of cleaning by the time everything’s back in place, something that he’s usually happy to do. What can he say, it’s calming.

Clementine comes back a little after he’s done and he pauses his embroidery for a minute to talk to her, thankful he managed to get the mess cleaned up in time.

“How was your trip?”

“You make it sound so exciting,” she chuckles. “It was only a visit to the bank and a friend. She’s a lawyer you know, a very good one from what I hear. It went well though, thank you.” He nods. “How about we end our day early, hm?”

“Are you sure?” He sets the embroidery aside. “I wouldn’t want to-”

“Nonsense, get some rest,” she waves him off. “I swear, you could carry around everything I own with those bags under your eyes, they’re so big. Now shoo, shoo!” She flicks her hands at him, shooing him out of his seat, and he laughs as he’s herded to the front door.

“Alright, alright!” he laughs. “I’m going! See you tomorrow, Clem!” Clementine waves as he leaves the building heading towards Tubburger. He can do this. He’s only seeing his best friend for the first time since dying and getting sent to another universe, no big deal. Well, technically he already saw him but that’s not the point!

As he walks he focuses on keeping his breathing steady. He’s going to go inside this time. Not just hover near the entrance like last time. He’s going to go inside and he’s going to talk to Tubbo and he’s not going to run away again. Okay, deep breath in, deep breath out. In. Out. In. Out. He can do this.

He focuses on his feet as they scrape against the pavement and on the cars driving past and on the people as they walk by him, the crowd parting with every step. He doesn’t question

why. He's learned not to question certain things. Instead he focuses on everything but where he's going and who he's going to see.

He stops as his feet meet the door to the restaurant. He blinks a few times and steps back to make sure he's in the right place. He is. He didn't even realize he was here. His stomach drops and suddenly the anxiety he's been fending off with a stick returns full force. Oh gods he's actually going to do this.

He takes a deep breath and shakily pushes open the door, mentally preparing himself for what he's about to see, and steps inside.

"Welcome to Tubburger, what can I get for yo- it's you!" Tommy startles at the recognition in his eyes, visible unlike his best friend who always had his hair hanging over them, and his mouth opens and closes as he searches for something to say. He should have realized he would remember. Tubbo hurries around the corner excitedly and stops a little in front of him. "How are you doing? I got worried when you went running off into Las Nevadas. It's not safe, you know. Did you get home alright?"

"Uh, um, yeah, I'm- yeah, I'm alright," Tommy manages to say.

"I'm glad," Tubbo smiles. He's missed that smile. He can't remember the last time he saw Tubbo smile like that. "So what can I get for you today?"

"I'm not too sure, big man," Tommy responds. "Never been to a place like this before."

"Well, we have burgers, fries, onion rings, wings, and chicken tenders for food and shakes and soft drinks for, well, drinks. There's more on the menu if you want to take a look." He points up at the large board with white chalk lettering behind him with a smile.

"I'll take a look at that then." Tommy walks closer to the counter, Tubbo walking back around to the employee side, and scans the menu. "I'll take a regular burger, fries, and... a milkshake? Chocolate, I guess." What does shaking the milk have to do with anything? And what the flying fuck is a 'fries'?

"Sure thing boss man." Tubbo turns away, missing the terrible grief in Tommy's eyes at the nickname. It's been so long since he's heard Tubbo call him that. God's he's pathetic. He's getting a second chance to live his life, something he never would have thought he'd deserve let alone get the chance at, and here he is, moping around because he misses home.

It doesn't take long for Tubbo to return with his food, a plate with a burger and fries and a tall glass with a thick brown liquid in it. Apparently shaking milk has a pretty big impact. Tommy looks around the restaurant for a minute before deciding he might as well sit down at the bar seats. He wants to talk to Tubbo more. He takes the tray holding his food, the money in his hands trading places with it, and sets it down on the edge of the bar seats on the opposite side as the register. It's the safest place to sit at the bar since it's slightly hidden from the floor to ceiling windows of the storefront. Just in case.

He pulled the dishes off the tray and while the plate was overly hot the cup holding his 'milkshake' was very, very cold. It was like it was taken straight from the arctic and put in

front of him it was so cold. It even looked like colored snow. How the fuck did Tubbo get snow here? They're nowhere near a biome with snow! Either way, it looks delicious. Not that he thinks brown snow is delicious because that would be gross.

He ignores the milkshake for the time being and grabs the burger. It didn't fall apart immediately which is nice and it isn't hard as a rock either which is even better so he brings it up to his mouth and takes a bite making sure to get something from every layer.

"This is fucking amazing," Tommy mumbles through the bite. "The bestest burger I've ever eaten." He takes another enthusiastic bite.

Tubbo laughs, the same laugh Tommy grew up beside, and smiles. "I'm glad you like it. Usually people only tell me that when they're high, drunk, or both. You aren't high, are you?"

"No," Tommy laughs. "Sounds like fun though."

"Agreed," Tubbo nods and they both start laughing. Tommy reaches for the drink, almost absentmindedly, and takes a gulp through the straw. His eyes widen and he's quick to take another sip.

"Holy shit," Tommy laughs. "This is so good, how is this so good? How does shaking milk make it so much better? Did you put drugs in this? Stop laughing, I need you to tell me if you put drugs in my milkshake."

"It's just a milkshake man," Tubbo laughs.

"And I'm asking if you put drugs in it," Tommy responds, jokingly serious. "There's no way this is so good without them."

"That's just how they taste boss man."

"Well how am I supposed to know that! It's not like I've got anything else to compare it to. It's my first time trying one," Tommy responds. "There's got to be fucking drugs in this shit," he mumbles, moving the straw around in the drink and tilting it while in the air to look inside as if he could see them if he squints at it enough.

"Wait a second, you've *never* had a milkshake before?"

"Nope," Tommy responds and decides he wants more of the, possibly drug-filled, drink and starts chugging, disregarding the straw entirely.

"Wait, slow down! You'll get a-"

"Fuck!" Tommy drops the drink back to the counter, thankfully not breaking the glass or spilling it, and pushes his hands into his head. "What the fuck!"

"-brain freeze..."

“The fuck is a brain freeze and why does it feel like my brain is punching me!” Tommy yells. “Is this a power or something?” The pressure does nothing and, unsurprisingly, neither does hitting his head against the counter.

“Hey, calm down,” Tubbo says. “Here, put your tongue on the roof of your mouth. It’ll go away quicker.” He has no clue how that would help, but he does it anyway. Surprisingly the feeling begins to fade and he’s left wondering how the hell that worked.

“What the fuck?”

“Brain freeze’s suck. You get ‘em when you drink something really cold really fast.”

“Okay,” Tommy says slowly. “I guess that makes sense.” He’s suddenly glad he never found it worth it to travel all the way to the arctic to get ice for a cold drink in the summer. There would have been no avoiding a brain freeze in that scenario. He pushes the drink to the side for the time being to finish his burger and fries.

“I’ll be back in a minute.” Tubbo disappears for a bit and when he comes back he has another tray, this one with five glasses on it, each with a different color of milkshake in it. “Here you go!”

“What?”

“You said you’ve never had one before and I’ve decided you’re not allowed to leave until you’ve tried every flavor!”

“Seriously? How much-” Tommy’s stopped before he can ever reach for his wallet.

“No charge.” Tubbo pushes the drinks closer to him.

“Are you sur-”

“Yes, now try them before I steal one. Oh, and dip your fries in them. It’s the best!” Tommy, hesitating only slightly, takes a fry and sticks it into the closest milkshake. Vanilla he assumes based on the color. The fry was small and thin and smelled like a baked potato with salt all over it and he makes sure at least half of it is coated in the drink before bringing the whole cup closer to stop it from dripping when he bites into it. He sticks the combination in his mouth and Tubbo was right, this really is the best.

“Great, right?” Tommy nods his agreement.

“Amazing! Poggers, dare I say it.” Tubbo laughs as Tommy shoves an entire handful of shake dipped fries in his mouth. He’s decided, fries are the only acceptable way to eat potatoes.

“Try the other flavors.” Tubbo points to each of the drinks in turn. “That one’s cookies and cream, this one’s mint, that’s strawberry, and this one’s caramel.” Tommy tries each one with and without fries and each one seems better than the last.

“Definitely contains drugs, holy shit.” Tubbo bursts out laughing and Tommy smiles. He’s missed hanging out with him like this. It’s not the same, it’ll never be the same as it was, but

it's close enough and that's enough for him. He's happy with what he's got and right now that's his brother in all but blood.

"So, what brings you to Tubburger so early?" Tubbo asks.

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"Most people only come here when they're drunk or high or something and that's usually at night. That or lunch time. It's barely even dinner time yet," he shrugs.

"I was hungry," Tommy shrugs and grabs two of the nearest shakes, caramel and strawberry, and starts drinking them at the same time. Gods is he glad drinks don't fill up his hunger bar. "Is it a crime?" Tommy raises his chin and looks at him through side eyes with a hum and Tubbo laughs.

"Course not, boss man," Tubbo responds. "I was just curious."

"What about you? What made you decide to name the place Tubburger?"

"My name's Tubbo and it's a burger place," he shrugs. "What else would I do?"

"There is truly nothing else. No name could compare." Tommy nods.

"Exactly!" Tubbo grins ear to ear, teeth on full display, and Tommy smiles back. It's nice seeing Tubbo so happy again. Towards the end, smiles were in short supply from Tubbo. Between Michael getting kidnapped and Ranboo dying, such a carefree expression wasn't exactly easy to come by. For anyone really. Even after he got Michael back he wasn't back to his old self, but he couldn't blame him. He did lose his husband after all. "Wait, how'd you know I named the place?"

Tommy points to the name tag which says Tubbo. The one pinned to his shirt, not the one hovering over his head that only Tommy can see. "Hunch." Good save self. He'd pat himself on the back if that wouldn't look suspicious as fuck.

"Ahh. Well, now you know my name, so do I get to know yours stranger?"

The reminder sends Tommy's mood dropping right back down. Tubbo doesn't know him. This isn't Tubbo, not the one he knew. This Tubbo doesn't know him. They might as well be strangers and he doesn't know if he can stand that. How do you start all over with someone you've always viewed as your other half? How can you even try when you know that it'll never even come close to what you had before? That no matter how hard you try you'll never be brothers again.

"I'm Tommy," he responds solemnly. "Tommy Innit."

"Nice to meet you Mr. Innit," Tubbo laughs. The bell rings and Tubbo looks up towards the door. "Sorry to cut our time short, but it seems like I have another customer." Tubbo leaves with a wave and a smile and Tommy does his best to return it. Then Tubbo is talking to the customer and Tommy is sitting in his bar stool with two unfinished shakes and a few burnt fries, melancholic and alone.

When Tubbo returns to continue the conversation with his new friend he finds neatly stacked dishes and a pile of primes, enough to cover five milkshakes, and no blonde in sight.

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Tubbo lets the door close behind him, not bothering to muffle the noise as he walks into his shared apartment. "I'm home!" He throws his keys into the dish on the side table and locks the door behind him as he toes off his shoes.

"Hey Tubbo," his roommate calls back. "I'm just finishing up dinner."

"What're we eating?" Tubbo rises on his tiptoes to peer into the pot simmering on the stove. He groans. "Spaghetti? Again?"

"You don't have to sound so disappointed," Ranboo mutters. "Spaghetti is delicious!"

"Not when you have it every fucking night." Tubbo throws himself on the couch, glaring halfheartedly at his roommate.

"It's not *every* night," they respond, stirring the pot. "Just most of them." Tubbo groans again, but Ranboo ignores him and continues making their meal.

Tubbo sighs and pulls over his laptop, an overly clunky patchwork of upgrades he's made over the years, and is tapping away within seconds. They're content in the comfortable silence for a long while and when the food is finally ready Tubbo puts aside his computer, albeit reluctantly, and joins his roommate at the counter to eat.

"Anything interesting happen today?" Ranboo asks.

"Not really," Tubbo responds, chewing slowly as he thinks back on his day. "On second thought, yeah! There was this guy who actually didn't know what a milkshake was!"

"Really?" Ranboo raises his eyebrows.

"Yeah." Tubbo snorts. "He accused me of putting drugs in it cause it was so good." Ranboo chokes on his food and hits his fist against his chest.

"Wow," they say through their choking, coughs breaking through their words. "It seems- huh- hm, seems like your day was a lot more entertaining than mine was."

"Yeah, I doubt that." Tubbo sticks his fork into the pasta and spins it until the macaroni is caught in the loops and shoves it into his mouth. "The food service industry is boring as fuck."

"Says the one who always has interesting stories to tell," Ranboo grumbles.

"I don't know," Tubbo shrugs. "I think hearing about the flower shop is *very* interesting."

"You're just saying that."

“No, I’m not,” Tubbo insists, nodding along with his words. “I love hearing you talk about explaining the difference between red and white camellias to people for the hundredth time. It’s never not interesting.”

“Weren’t you trying to convince me your job was more boring? You’re not even trying to hide your sarcasm.”

“Oh, not in the slightest.” Tubbo laughs as Ranboo signs. The friends finish their meals making light banter, too worn out after their long days at work to do much else, before cleaning up from dinner. It was Tubbo’s turn to wash the dishes that night which meant Ranboo would eventually do them. Tubbo hated doing the dishes with a passion and once broke every dish they had to get out of it, and only half of them were by accident. He much preferred making messes to cleaning them. Chores and responsibilities just weren’t his thing. Except when it came to inventing that is. Anything that involved making things really. Broken table? He’ll have it fixed up in no time! Tv’s stuck on static again? Ten minutes and it’s brand new! Brain implant that grants invisibility? Still working on it, but he’s getting close! He’ll get it one day, gods damn it.

Though now that he thinks about it, inventing can get pretty messy too. Ranboo usually ends up cleaning up his piles of tools and spare pieces when he leaves them spread out for a few days too many. What can he say, cleaning’s just not his thing.

Tubbo tosses Ranboo their suit and they catch it, leaving the room to put it on. Tubbo takes his own suit and walks into the bathroom to change. He pulls on his black tank top with a turtleneck and cargo pants before grabbing his usual winter coat. The first coat he used was pretty much the same, but it was hell to wear in the summer, even if it was a godsend during the winter, but the new one he modified made sure he was warm in the winter and cool in the summer, always the perfect temperature.

He made quick work of lacing up his combat boots, making sure they were snug and didn’t shift when he stepped, and finally pulled on his gas mask and black biker goggles with tinted glass.

Both vigilante’s met in the living room when they were done putting on their suits and they climbed up to the roof and started scouting out crime.

“Enderwalk, you have anything?”

“Nothing,” he responds. “You?”

“Nothing yet.” A scream echoes through the street and Aries starts heading in that direction. He jinxed it. “Nevermind, I think I’ve got something.” Aries stops at the edge of the roof and looks down at the scene below him, assessing the situation. A woman was unconscious on the pavement and her bag was being pilfered by two others. They were shoving each other aside to get the best loot, the woman’s wallet in pieces on the ground. “One victim, unconscious, and two muggers, going through her bag.”

“Need any backup?”

“No, but I’ll keep you updated,” Aries responds and clicks off his earpiece since he knows it can be distracting to fight while hearing feedback from the other line. He can reactivate it by doing a specific hand movement or by tapping his earpiece, so it’s not like he won’t be able to call for help if he needs it. Not to mention the emergency button he has just in case, but that’s only for dire circumstances. As in life or death situations *only*. Anything less would be a waste.

Aries drops in behind the two criminals and, before they can notice him, hits one in the back of the head sending him to the ground. He turns to face the other, but she dodges out of the way with a speed he knows to be inhuman.

“Speed power then,” he mutters, mask reducing his words to muffled sounds.

“Aries,” she drawls. “What a nice surprise. It’s been a while since you’ve been in this part of town.”

“I like to stop back in once in a while,” Aries responds, voice clear with his higher volume. “Make sure the riff raff isn’t acting up.”

“Well isn’t that nice,” she spits before running forward, kick aimed for his torso. With orange eyes he blocks it with his forearm and grabs it, but before he can get a grip, one that she wouldn’t be able to escape, she retreats to the other side of the alley with a scowl.

“Not up for a fight?” Aries taunts. “Tired, perhaps?”

“Cocky mother fucker,” she snarls and runs at him. She sends a barrage of hits his way and each one he blocks with ease, tanking what he couldn’t block in time, the glow of his eyes steadily becoming more visible to the point where he starts to worry she might be able to see it through the tint of the glass. She screams in frustration and starts attacking faster and while most people would have buckled under the attacks most people aren’t Aries.

Aries plans as he defends, waiting for the perfect moment to strike, and finally he sees it. He doesn’t hesitate to take immediate advantage of the opening and swings. His fist catches her right in the side and she’s sent flying into the wall of the alley with a crack.

“Fuck, too hard,” he mutters and jogs forward, dim orange light fading from his eyes with every second that passes. He kneels down and searches for a pulse, releasing a breath when he finds it. He flicks his wrist in a quick movement, adding a spinning sort of flourish to the end, and his earpiece clicks back on. “The muggers have been dealt with. Only one of them got hit too hard.”

There’s a sigh. “I’m on my way.” A few seconds later Enderwalk appears next to him and Aries takes a second to thank his foresight to add a camera in his suit so Enderwalk could teleport right to him.

“What’s the verdict?”

“A couple of cracked ribs and a broken arm,” Enderwalk responds. “Could be better. Could be worse.”



“But not dead.”

“But not dead.” Enderwalk repeats with a nod and gently sets the mugger’s arm back on the ground. “We should notify the police and EMT’s now.” Aries nods and while Enderwalk notifies the police using their secure line Aries walks over to check on the victim. Her pulse is strong and she didn’t have any visible injuries so Aries guesses she has a concussion at worst.

When Aries steps away from the victim Enderwalk is restraining the criminals, zip tying them to a lamppost.

“Ready to move on?” Aries asks once the victim and criminals are situated, the woman’s items placed in her bag at her side the best they could get with most of her things in pieces. Enderwalk nods and they head off towards the next crime.

## Chapter End Notes

red camellia - you're the flame of my heart  
white camellia - your adorable

Hope you enjoyed the new pov! Tubbo is one of the characters I'm most excited to explore the backstory of and I'm glad he's finally been officially introduced :)

# Chapter Fourteen

## Chapter Summary

Meeting in the hero tower and meeting the president.

## Chapter Notes

Tw's:  
referenced murder/blood/violence

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Settle down everyone,” Puffy calls and the cacophony of voices finally dulls down to a minimum as she steps up to the front of the room. “I know you’re all anxious, but we have to keep order.”

Everyone makes their way to their seats, many in costume from a long night of heavy patrols in the area of the warehouse murder despite the usual scarcity of high ranked heroes in the area. Many thought it would be a good idea to try to commit crimes around a recently ‘successful’ one despite knowing there’d be an increase of hero presence for a while due to said crime. All of this summed up meant, it was a busy night for everyone.

The door starts sliding open and knowing exactly who thought it would be a good idea to sneak into a meeting, yet again, while they were supposed to be on *bed rest* Puffy wordlessly sends Foolish to take care of him before the door could even make it halfway open.

“It seems we’ll have to delay a few minutes for Foolish to return,” Puffy sighs, fingers rubbing circles on her temples. She did not get enough sleep for this. Being the head of the Hero Tower can have its perks, but at times like this it’s nothing but an endless headache from the sheer amount of all nighters pulled to complete paperwork and organize patrol shifts.

Foolish returns quicker than usual, sensing his parent’s less than ideal mood and making sure his trip is swift. Puffy nods gratefully and finally turns to address the room as a whole.

“As I’m sure you already know there was a murder near the docks in Lower L’Manburg sometime yesterday morning,” Puffy begins.

“I heard it was a massacre,” Thunderstruck mutters and immediately receives glares from most of the heroes assigned to the case. “Sorry,” he apologizes, hands held in the air as if to

say 'don't shoot'. "Just saying what I heard."

Siren clicks his tongue in contempt as he turns back to Puffy and the room's eyes are right back on her. "The heroes assigned to the case," she continues, "are Morph, Flare, Blade, Siren, Totem, and...Empath." As she expected the room exploded into sound once more as Niki's involvement in the case is made known. Murmurs of disbelief and people asking if she's sure it's a good idea. "Yes, I know-" she tries to calm the room. "Listen-"

"Shut up," Blade growls, eyes heavy with exhaustion. Something that is very obviously from going out on patrol despite not being scheduled and being let off for the day even if he was. Thankfully, the noise calms down and Puffy can hear herself think again.

"Thank you," Puffy says. "I know this is a shock *but*," she continues before anyone can speak over her. "It is, regrettably, necessary for the case for Empath to be involved and she has agreed to participate."

"It was her decision," Wilbur cuts in. "Thinking otherwise would just be offensive." Puffy catches Niki mouth a quick 'thank you' his way and Puffy nods in his direction.

"It was Niki's decision to join the case and I will hear nothing more about it unless from Niki herself, understand?" Everyone nods in agreement, many sheepish from their actions, and Puffy finally turns to the conversation to the topic the meeting was called for. "The warehouse massacre," she begins, everyone falling into their professional personas at the words, idle chatter falling away. "There were a total of nineteen bodies found. Six were killed the night before and the other thirteen were put at varying time frames, but all estimated to be at least a week old."

Puffy gestures for Blade to take over and with a slightly dramatic sigh he tackles trying to explain the situation fully to a group of people who know practically nothing about it. "Six of the bodies were normal while the other thirteen, the older ones, had a few abnormalities. Due to the nature of those abnormalities they have been tentatively linked to the ones of the Stand Still case. They were largely rotted on the inside, despite the skin remaining largely untouched and most not being old enough for the level of decomposition they were found in. On top of that their blood was heavily discolored, appearing more black than red."

"Any theories as to why?" AweSamDude asks.

"Yes," Blade continues with a nod. "Their blood was contaminated by something. It wasn't actually blood, not entirely anyway. It was biological, there's no doubt about that, but I would say it was more plant-like than anything else. I couldn't move it very well and it didn't smell metallic. It smelled more like heavily rotted fruit."

"Plant-like?" AweSamDude mutters to himself, rubbing his chin. "Any idea what it could be?"

"Not yet," Blade answers. "But I made sure some were sent to the lab for testing."

"I'm not sure if a sample was taken from Stand Still's accomplices, but if there was I'll have them tested against each other," AweSamDude adds. Blade nods and a Nook separates itself

from Sam to go check.

“The murder method was unusual,” Blade continues, debriefing the room on what happened to the best of his abilities. “Most likely a larger blade, along the lines of an axe or a sword. It’s unlikely that a power was used, but it is possible. We don’t know enough at this time to rule out one or another.”

“Wait a second,” Thunderstruck cuts in. “You’re talking like this was one person. There’s no way someone could do something like that alone.”

“That’s because it was,” Niki says and all eyes snap to her in an instant. “There was one person who initiated the attack, the killer, and one who watched, but their emotions were more distant, like they were far away or hidden, but still there in spirit. It could be the effect of a power, but I’m sure of this, there was one killer, one observer, and nineteen victims. No more than that.”

The room is silent in the wake of Niki’s words. A single person capable of killing so many people just like that? There weren’t many hiding places in the warehouse and blades are up close weapons. When she skimmed the file she saw that no blood belonging to the killer was left behind, but blades are up close weapons. You have to be extremely skilled to fight off nineteen people with no long range weaponry and not get a single injury deep enough to leave blood. It was likely the victims rushed at the killer more than one at the time, it would be stupid to attack one at a time, which would only make it harder.

The thought that there was someone out there powerful and skilled enough to accomplish something like this was difficult to believe and yet she has all the evidence laid out right in front of her. Only someone with years of training would be able to do something like this. The file did mention the killer entering through an upper floor window which means there was some element of surprise which does explain a few deaths, but it’s still difficult to believe.

Either way, Puffy was right to worry. It’s only made worse by the fact that it’s already starting to look worse than she feared.

There’s a light tap on the counter and Puffy turns her attention towards Silence. *For someone to be capable of something like this it can’t be their first time.*

“That’s a theory we’ve entertained as well,” Wilbur says and gestures for Niki to explain.

“Their emotions,” she starts, doing her best to hide the slight tremor in her voice behind her professional tone, “supported the theory. They seemed to long for the fight like they missed it and they were prideful, reveling in their victory. They were angry too. *Very* angry.”

“So revenge then,” PantsEater butts in, voice jovial despite the circumstances.

“That’s what we were thinking,” Wilbur answers for Niki as she recollects herself, taking a second to close her eyes and take steady, even breaths.

“Is there anything else to note?” Puffy asks after a lull in the conversation.

“The only blood found belonged to the victims. There was no evidence of the murderer or observer anywhere in the warehouse,” Blade says. “Blood wise at least.”

“That alone is proof this isn’t their first time,” Thunderstruck says, hands flying into the air before smacking back down onto the table. “If they’re a good enough fighter to not get injured fighting *nineteen people* with a close quarters weapon then they *have* to have had practice and lots of it.”

“We can’t be sure of something until we have substantial evidence. Making assumptions will only harm the case in the long run,” Puffy says. “For all we know it’s the first time they’ve killed and their power was able to win them the battle before it could really begin. For now we will take everything not supported by incontestable evidence with a grain of salt.”

“Like that vigilante! What was his name...Time Turner? Keeper? Something like that, right? Can’t he like pause time or something? Winning a fight with a power like that would be easy as shit,” Thunderstruck says.

*“While a power like that would be a contender for a crime like this we know TimeKeeper is not at fault. He was placed in Kinoko and Legstedshire for the majority of the past few nights and his limit is estimated to be a minute at most. It would be impossible to travel to the other side of the Esempii, kill nineteen people in the way that they were, and return like nothing happened even if he was able to teleport on top of his time based powers,”* Silence signs.

“Not to mention how spread out the bodies were,” Quackity chimes in.

“I wasn’t accusing the guy,” Thunderstruck scoffs, leaning back in his chair with his arms crossed. “Just an idea.”

“It was a good one,” Puffy placates. “It is very likely that our suspect will have a power along the lines of TimeKeepers and it’s something that should be kept in mind moving forward. Now, on the subject of victims...” Puffy shuffles through the papers and grabs a small file containing all the information they’ve managed to compile on the victims. “The easiest to identify were relatively new to the crime scene. They created their own crime group that, as far as we can tell, has yet to be officially named. It was closed to new members and all pre-existing members were killed in the attack.”

Everyone listens closely as Puffy begins to list each member and how they died. “...And finally Robert was killed on impact from what we believe to be an axe to the chest. We also have reason to believe he was the last to die, but that can not be confirmed until we view the security footage.” She taps the stack of papers against the desk to even them out, Robert’s picture staring at her from his file page on the top of the pile, before setting them off to the side.

“And the rest?” Phil asks.

“A few have been identified,” Puffy confirms. “Of the nine identified, six had missing person’s reports filed, some dating back to upwards three months ago. We are currently looking through the last six months of missing person’s reports for any possible matches with

the remaining victims, but so far we haven't found anything. A common thread we noticed was the majority victims were from Logstedshire with a few from Pogtopia.”

“So they don’t want people to notice they’re missing,” Foolish suggests.

“As it would appear,” Puffy responds, a small sigh escaping her lips.

“Why would they want that?” Wilbur mutters. “If the crime was for revenge then why target people who are less likely to be looked for?”

“Maybe it was a dumping ground? The murder took place and some others took the chance to dump some bodies?” PantsEater shrugged.

“It’s possible,” Niki agrees, eyes squinted and looking slightly up and to the side as she thinks back to the day before. “I wouldn’t have been able to pick up on weaker emotions like that under the stronger ones and I don’t remember feeling too much from the older bodies.”

“It’s a theory to consider,” Puffy nods. It would be difficult to move such badly decomposed bodies, but it is possible if done right. There is the fact that the way they died and how the scene appeared to consider. The wounds were congruent with the wounds found on the other victims and the same goes for the body placements. It’s still something to look into. “Are there any other questions before we watch the security footage?”

“I don’t have a question,” AweSamDude pipes up, “but I do have information. Nook searched the database and there was a small sample taken of the ‘blood’ from the deaths of Stand Still’s associates. It may not be enough for an accurate test of its components, but it may be possible to compare with the warehouse murders.”

“Thank you Awesamdude,” Puffy nods. “When that information becomes available please be sure to share it with me or any of the heroes on the case. Whoever you tell will be sure to share it with the others.”

“Of course,” AweSamDude responds with a nod and Puffy returns it. She takes a deep breath, nodding a few more times.

“Okay,” she mutters, continuing to nod as she searches through her papers. She really needs to get some sleep. Maybe she can take a quick break before her meeting with Schlatt? She struggles to grab what she needs and finally finds the remote under a couple of files. “No more questions, yes?” People shake their heads in response and she starts messing with the projector behind her. “Only one of the camera’s in the area were working, the others either suffering from extreme water damage or were broken from something or other. From what I’m told the footage is damaged and difficult to make out so do your best to see what’s going on.”

She presses a button and gestures for Foolish to grab the lights. The screen lights up just as the lights go off, a bright blue screen with numbers in the corner with the date and time. The screen blinks a few times before switching to a dark view of a warehouse, one door open slightly giving off a sliver of light into the street. The footage itself was grainy and the sound

is staticy from the poor condition of the camera, easily a few years out of date and in need of replacing.

Nothing happens for a moment, the entire room watching closely for something to happen, but then she sees it. A person, tall and sticking by the shadows, enters the view. She leaned in further to get a better look, but it was too blurry to make out anything other than a black outfit and a splotch of dirty yellow she assumes is hair. The figure moves closer to the doors and pauses to look inside. The loud cheering from inside the building is an easy cover as the person closes the door and grabs a nearby chain, rusted but sturdy, from the ground and loops it through the doors. They tug at it a few times, the sound of rattling metal scraping her eardrums with the poor quality, before stepping back and ducking around the corner.

She assumes they enter through the back window as stated in the report and a minute later screaming rings out from the video. The scream of a name and the screams of the dying. Screeching, an inhuman sound that sends shivers down her spine, brings the noise to a crescendo before little by little it gets quieter until there is barely a sound. Even the static that accompanied every sound seemed to have gone quiet, but that was probably just because of how suddenly everything quieted back down.

The static, being the only sound left, slowly seems to consume the room as they wait, it rises and falls in pitch almost like laughter, taunting them with the knowledge it holds that they so desperately need just out of reach. The doors rattle, pulled in and out, but after a second they stop and it's quiet again, still. A moment later a figure is just visible landing on the roof a building over. They don't stick around long and within a minute they're climbing down the other side, disappearing from the footage. Never once did their head turn to look at the camera.

She grabs the remote and rewinds it a few seconds until it's paused when the suspect is standing on the edge of the building, head turned slightly in the direction of the camera. Only enough for a sliver of their face to be shown, the quality poor enough for it only to be a smudge of color next to more smudges of color.

"We have confirmation there was only one killer," Techno shrugs, pointing out the bright side in the overwhelming lack of information gained.

"And nothing else," Thunderstruck scoffs. "Why the hell was the quality so bad?"

"Lower L'Manburg hasn't had the money for renovations of public property in recent years," AweSamDude says. "It's likely the reason so many of the camera's were broken and damaged. That and this was a largely abandoned section of the district."

"Makes sense," Thunderstruck admits.

"Are there any more questions or observations?" Puffy asks. When no one speaks up she nods. "There will be no changes to those assigned to the case at this time and if there is anything you notice, theories, or questions you think may help the case please let anyone involved know. Until then we'll be moving on to our next order of business." She shuffles through her papers and puts away everything to do with the warehouse case into its folder before setting it aside. Foolish flicks the lights back on and she turns off the projector.

Scanning the last paper she has yet to touch a small smile makes its way to her face. “Recently Eret has reached out to the Hero Tower in search of our support in the upcoming election.”

There’s a cheer at the good news after the morning of morbid discussions and Puffy smiles, letting it go on for a few moments longer than usual.

“Alright now, calm down,” she says and the room falls back into order with smiles adorning their faces. “Technically, since we are under the control of the government, we are prohibited from openly opposing the current president, but we are able to support the opposition in private and as such we will be abstaining from openly supporting either candidate.”

There’s another cheer at that. No one wants Schlatt to remain president for another term. Puffy regrets to admit she voted for him once upon a time. Many did. He used pretty words to paint a picture of promises. Affordable homes for the poor, protection for all, not just the rich and well off, a better life for *everyone*. Then year after year he didn’t come through. Houses got pricier, heroes were sent to the rich and told to ignore the poor, only sent to the poorer districts for ‘training’, unemployment and homelessness was at an all time high.

Schlatt claims he’s trying and for a while he was believed, people continuing to choose him in elections despite his shortcomings, but as time went on he stopped becoming the promising candidate and became the, perceived, lesser of two evils. That’s not to mention the amount of stuff he keeps hidden. She knows for a fact if everything he’s covered up and kept hidden came out there’d be an uproar of people calling for him to leave office. If that didn’t get him out then he would be forced out through other means. Allegations of under the table deals and alleged abductions all the way to child abuse of a child he claims doesn’t exist despite repeated mentions of him having one over the years.

There’s no proof of course, but living with a truth power your entire life can teach you a few things. She can usually tell when someone’s lying, power or not, and Schlatt is one of the biggest liars she’s ever met. She only regrets not being able to do something about him sooner.

“I believe that is all for this meeting,” Puffy announces before the chatter can overtake her voice. “You are dismissed.” Everyone files from the room and Puffy sends Niki a reassuring smile as she leaves to open the cafe. Puffy on the other hand, heads deeper into the tower.

She slips her mask back onto her face, unwilling to risk her identity by wearing her costume without it in the halls even without her hair up in its signature braid. Her scabbard hits against her leg with every step, her sword weighing it down, and she holds a hand over it to keep it from flying out when she turns a corner.

She makes the trip on muscle memory, already familiar with the path from the many times she walked it over the years, both for herself and others. It doesn’t take long for her to arrive at the Med Bay, barely a few minutes passing from leaving the meeting room to her arrival. She doesn’t hesitate at the door, barely knocking as she enters, and makes a beeline for the only occupied cot.

She has a son to scold.



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Fundy takes a deep breath, a pile of paper in hand, before walking into the building. He scans his ID at the entrance and it beeps allowing him entry into the main lobby. People nod in his direction as he passes, him returning the action, as he hurries through the room to the elevators. He gets into one by himself and makes sure it closes before anyone can join him. He lets out a breath and steps back to wait for the elevator to rise to his stop.

Once on the right floor he hurries down the hall to an imposing door dressed up in a gaudy amount of gold. He raps his knuckles against the door making sure not to hit too hard. It's more than likely that the room's occupant is either drunk or heavily hungover and he's not in the mood to deal with him while he's in a bad mood on top of it because he knocked too loud and now his head is hurting.

"Who is it?" A harsh voice snaps from behind the door and Fundy swallows thickly before answering. This never gets any easier.

"It's Fundy, sir," he responds and hears a muttered 'come in' before opening the door. Instantly the smell of alcohol invades his senses and he poorly hides the scrunch of his nose in response. Sometimes he really hates his heightened sense of smell.

"What do you want?" Schlatt demands the second the doors are open. His head resting on one of his hands as he looks over some papers, an opened bottle held weakly in the other. He brings the bottle to his lips and takes a large swig before finally turning his eyes to the man. "Well?" A hiccup. "The fuck d'you want?"

"You have a press conference about the election in twenty minutes," Fundy explains. "I've brought your talking points and notecards for your speech."

Schlatt groans, "Fine, jus put'em on muh desk." He waves his hand towards the cluttered area he sat at and Fundy does so. Fundy doesn't leave the office and after a few minutes of awkward silence Schlatt glares at him. "Well? What are you still doing here?" He snaps, anger born clarity temporarily putting a stop to the drunk slurring of his speech. "Leave!"

"My apologies sir," Fundy says. "I will be waiting outside to escort you."

"I don't need a fucking escort you-" Fundy shuts the door before he can hear the rest of Schlatt's words, letting out another deep breath as the choking scent of alcohol is locked into the office, and walks over to his nearby desk to wait.

Ten minutes later Schlatt exits his office, tie still loose and wrinkled, and stumbles into the open entranceway, note cards practically crumpled in his grip. Fundy is by his side in a second, clipboard and notes at the ready for reference.

"After the conference you have a meeting with Captain from the Hero Tower," Fundy reads aloud as he looks over the day's schedule. "After that you have a dinner meeting with Eret to discuss the upcoming election."

“Discuss,” Schlatt scoffs to himself, unaware, or more likely uncaring, that Fundy can hear him. “We ain’t discussing shit. I’m gonna get him to drop out even if I have to fucking make him.”

Fundy ignores the president’s words, but files them away for later. When he gets a free moment he’ll write them down to report back to Jester, but for now he keeps it in the small corner of his brain reserved solely for information stolen from J. Schlatt.

“Where the fuck are we going?” Schlatt grumbles.

“The press conference, sir. It’s-”

“I know that, dumbass! Where’s the fucking conference!”

“In the main hall of the White House.”

“Fucking useless,” Schlatt mutters before grumbling to himself, low enough that even Fundy can’t hear, and starts fixing his appearance. Apparently the hidden advantage of having a strength ability is a sped up metabolism. It’s honestly the only reason Schlatt hasn’t been kicked from office for drinking on the job. He can drink all he wants, but by the time he gets where he needs to go he’s usually sober enough that you can’t tell if you don’t know where to look. Fundy only needs a second or two to figure out if he’s drunk most days or tipsy at the very least.

“My heroes. How are they?”

“‘How are they,’ sir?” Fundy asks for clarification.

“The new recruits! How are they?” Schlatt yells.

Fundy flips through his papers and glances at one towards the bottom. “Uh, thirty-nine percent are estimated to die within forty-eight hours of first combat with an experienced villain. Fifty percent within the first seventy-two.”

“I don’t fund this program to give me weak heroes!” Schlatt yells. “What the hell are they doing with all the money I’m giving them, huh!”

“You don’t sir.” Fundy shrinks back from Schlatt’s glare and quickly corrects himself. “You cut funding to the hero program. There isn’t enough to hire all the mentors needed for the new recruits, pay the heroes for the hours they put in, medical expenses and netherite and equipment costs.”

“Then cut medical costs!”

“If you cut medical costs they’ll die, sir.”

“Fine, fine! Cut their fucking paychecks.”

“Sir, if I may-”

“Shut up and do as I fucking say.”

“Yes sir, sorry sir.”

“Weak,” Schlatt mutters and fixes his tie. “Weak shits aren’t doing shit. Aren’t worth fucking anything...” Schlatt’s ramblings become too quiet for Fundy to hear outside of an errant syllable or two, but Fundy can make a guess at what’s being said.

They come to a stop in front of a door and Schlatt draws himself up, plastering a smile on his face and straightening his tie. He squares his shoulders and smooths out his suit creating the perfect picture of a perfect president that’s confident in his reelection.

The second Schlatt walks into the room the cacophony of reporters and camera shutters becomes louder and he walks up to the front podium with confidence only a drunkard can possess.

“Schlatt! President Schlatt!”

“President Schlatt!”

“Calm down, calm down,” Schlatt says, charm turned up to the max. He glances down at his notecards and after looking at the speech decides to discard it, dropping them onto the podium where they slide to the floor. Fundy slips into the room, taking up his post in the corner, and holds his pen at the ready to take notes.

“President Schlatt! Is it true you’re running for reelection?”

“Yes, that is true. It would be my honor to continue to serve as your president.”

“How do you feel about your opponent, Eret?”

“Every opponent is a worthy opponent. I’m thrilled to be competing against him in the coming election.”

“Why should anyone vote for you? You haven’t come through with any of your proposed changes last term, so why should we believe you’ll come through this time?”

Fundy can see the rage in Schlatt’s eyes even from his place at the edge of the room and resolves to give him some cool off time before returning to his side. No one wants a repeat of the incident.

“While I may not have managed to follow through with as many of the proposed ideas as I would have hoped I have been able to get multiple others off the ground and if I’m reelected I can promise you that I will continue working towards making those changes into a reality and make like in the Esempii better for *everyone*.” The crowd erupts into cheers, a few eye rolls mixed in, and things go on.

For a while the questions are generic and not too disruptive, but Fundy could feel the problematic ones coming soon. There’s always one person who kicks it off and it’s only a matter of time before they speak up.

Schlatt answers each question thrown his way with a practiced ease that comes from years of fooling and manipulating people to his heart's content. Never once did his facade of the calm,

considerate president fall. Until one question that is. One that even the boldest aren't brave enough to ask, their reputation and likely their safety on the line.

"Schlatt! What do you have to say about the rumors of you abusing your son?"

Schlatt's eyes go cold, his face drops and he doesn't bother pulling on a smile. "I have no son."

"There are repeated interviews of you mentioning a son over the years, but for the last few years you've claimed you don't have one. Why is that?" the same reporter presses.

"I made a statement on that three years ago," Schlatt starts, anger clear despite his portrayed grief. "My precious son, Toby, was killed by a villain who broke into our home. It is a painful topic for me and I prefer not to speak of his loss which is why I do not entertain the topic for discussion." Nothing raises ratings like a sob story and nothing makes Schlatt happier than when he gets away with something, it makes him feel superior, powerful. Schlatt truly is one of the people Fundy hates most.

The conference goes on for a while longer, question after question, many of them repeated from past interviews, and when they start repeating the same questions from earlier that day, Fundy steps in.

"I apologize for the inconvenience, but the president is needed elsewhere." Fundy ignores the yelled questions as he corrals Schlatt off the stage. When they're out of the room Schlatt begins laughing.

"Tuberculosis," Schlatt cackles under his breath. "Toby's short for fucking Tuberculosis." That poor, poor kid. That name alone is reason to rebel. It's no wonder he ran. Fundy continues walking even as Schlatt devolves into hysterics at his son's name. "Best drunk decision I ever made that name." Fundy nods absentmindedly while Schlatt continues to stumble laughing down the hall.

Fundy lets him wear himself out before guiding him to his meeting with Captain. The meeting is set to take place in his show office because Schlatt drinks so constantly his office always smells like alcohol. So instead of fixing the problem by not drinking like most people would, he had an exact replica made a floor down to use for meetings so he could continue to be an alcoholic without repercussions.

"Get out of my sight," Schlatt commands as he walks into the room.

"Yes sir," Fundy responds before hurrying away from the office. He's got a bit before Schlatt's meeting is set to end so he might as well 'clean' Schlatt's office while he waits. He doesn't need to worry about Schlatt blowing up at Captain like he tended to do with others so it was unlikely to end early. He made the mistake of yelling at her once and he hasn't made it again since. Captain doesn't take shit and isn't afraid to put someone in their place. It was awesome.

Fundy spends the next hour cleaning, and by cleaning he means snooping around documents, while he waits for Schlatt's meeting to end and makes sure to leave a little before it was set to end.

There are a few hours before Schlatt's dinner meeting with Eret which means Fundy is free from his side in the meantime and he decides he may as well take his lunch at Tubburger. As he's walking into the main lobby he sees Captain waiting. Why is she still here? Usually she leaves pretty quickly after their meetings are over.

"Fundy, right?"

"That's me," Fundy responds with a nod of his head. "And you're Captain."

"That I am," she laughs.

"Is there something you need of me?" Fundy asks, doing his best to tone down his fidgeting.

"I've been coming here for years and I haven't actually met you before so I thought it was about time I did," she answers. "Would you be open to lunch?"

"Lunch? Me? With- with *you*?" Holy shit, this can go either really well or horribly wrong.

She laughs at his seemingly awestruck expression, though he bordered more on panic it was definitely at least slightly reverential, and smiles kindly at him. "If you're willing, of course."

"I- uhm, sure. I- I'd love to," he manages to say, his childhood love of heroes resurfacing as he speaks to one of his all time favorites.

"Great! I know this great place in Upper L'Manburg I think you might like."

"Sounds great. When are you thinking?"

"Now if that's not a problem."

"Sure, yeah sure, that sounds good. I was just about to take my lunch."

"Great! Let's get going then." Fundy does his best to keep his fanboy freakout internal as he follows Captain, *the* Captain, out of the building to a surprisingly inconspicuous car.

"It's always funny seeing people's reactions to a hero driving a minivan," she whispers conspiratorially as she catches his surprise.

He can't help but laugh as he climbs into the car. "It isn't exactly what you'd expect a hero to be driving."

"That is exactly what makes it funny." The drive isn't long, Captain leading the conversation as she drives what seems like a familiar route. Fundy couldn't have guessed where they were going, but with his luck he should have known. His heart drops as Captain pulls into a cafe parking lot with a wide smile on her face.

"We're here! Welcome to the Rose Petal Cafe!"

It feels like ages since Fundy's made an appearance. He's one of my favorite characters so he's pretty fun to write. And Schlatt has joined the story, I wonder what that will mean...

Also, sorry the chapter was later than usual I was sick all week and couldn't do much. Speaking of updates, I'm going to change my schedule a little bit. I'll probably post every other week from now on, but I'm not going to have a set day for a bit. I'll probably go back to a set schedule after final season is over, but we'll have to wait and see.

A quick fun fact: Gentoo penguins will 'propose' to each other using pebbles and will often spend a long time finding the perfect one.

Minor edits made: 10/7/23

# Chapter Fifteen

## Chapter Summary

Fundy and Captain talk.

## Chapter Notes

TW's:  
violence, death

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“We’re here! Welcome to the Rose Petal Cafe!”

Rose Petal Cafe? As in the Rose Petal Cafe Tommy goes to every day for lunch? Please say he doesn't run into him. He knows he will, he knows Tommy's schedule like the back of his hand at this point. It's not that he hates the kid, he actually quite likes him, it's just not an ideal situation. He's a spy and normally he's not supposed to interact with his targets, but the only way to get information about Tommy *is* to interact with him. With how unknown the guy is he may as well have just popped into existence. There is nothing about him anywhere predating a month ago. What makes the whole situation worse is that he could actually see himself being friends with the younger teen had the situation been different and yet he has no choice but to constantly back stab his trust and feed everything he's learned to Jester.

“Fundy?” Fundy snaps back to awareness and sees Captain standing outside the car holding her door open. “Are you alright?”

“Oh, sorry. Yeah, I’m fine.” He scrambles out of the car, wincing when his door slams shut in his haste to close it, and jogs to catch up to Captain in front of the cafe. She opens the door for him and he nods his thanks as he enters. He slowly walks into the building, eyes taking in his surroundings like a child sent to the bathroom on their own in a restaurant for the first time. Captain smiles and walks ahead of him, making a beeline to the counter where a pink haired woman was standing, smiling. He's pretty sure her name is Niki. Jester's mentioned her passing from time to time, more often recently than before. Another hero then. Empath, he's pretty sure.

“Hey Niki,” Captain greets. “This is Fundy. He's Schlatt's secretary,” she introduces them.

“Hi,” Fundy mumbles with a nod of his head.

“Schlatt, huh?” Niki asks and Fundy nods even though he knows she wasn’t actually asking. “That must suck. I’m not exactly his biggest fan.” Right, he remembers now. Jester gave him his files on her a while ago and one of the reasons she’s heavily against Schlatt is because of the tax raises. Her bakery was almost put out of business thanks to the raises and she was left quite bitter with him over it. Thankfully the bill banning unlawful taxing was passed and she managed to keep her shop open. Fundy’s pretty sure the only reason Schlatt actually lowered them was because his favorite liquor store went out of business from the raises. He then spent said tax dollars to reopen the store and have it renovated for good measure.

“Yeah, I can agree with you there,” he responds with a smile and shakes away the nerves clinging to him like a second skin. He has no reason to be so nervous. All he has to do is avoid letting Captain touch him so she can’t use her power and he’s all good to go. Heroes are just people after all. People put on a pedestal and treated like gods on earth who can do no wrong purely because of their profession. Luckily most of the corrupt heroes are lower in the ranks so they don’t have the sway or power to do any extreme damage like high ranking heroes do. Unfortunately that also means they tend to go overlooked which just leads to them getting away with even more.

“So, what can I get you?” Niki asks and gestures towards the menu on the wall behind her. “We’ve got sweet, we’ve got savory, you name it.”

“I’ll take my usual,” Captain says. She comes here often enough to have a usual then, good to know.

“I’ll have a berry tart please.”

“Coming right up.” Niki walks away to get their food and Puffy places money on the counter before Fundy can even look towards his wallet.

“I can-”

“I got it,” she denies. “I invited you out so I should be the one to pay. Besides, I’m happy to.” He shrugs. Who is he to deny a free meal? Niki returns with his tart and a croissant with ham and melty cheese presumably for Captain. They thank Niki before Captain leads him to a booth near the back of the cafe. It was right in front of the one Tommy sits in everyday without fail, minus the one time he didn’t go to lunch of course. And the time the cafe was closed, but that doesn’t really count. Fundy, regrettably, sits with his back to the door, Captain having chosen her seat first, and settles into his seat with only a little unease. He doesn’t like having his back to the entrances, no good spy does, but he takes solace in the fact that they were the only ones in the cafe other than a random person typing on a computer who looked more interested in their screen than a hero eating lunch. He doesn’t think he’d be able to handle people watching them, or more likely Captain, the entire time. He’s already nervous enough as it is.

“So,” she begins. “Let’s begin with introductions, shall we?”

“I already know who you are,” Fundy points out.

“Yes, but I don’t know who you are,” she counters. “Besides, it’s only polite.”



“Alright then,” Fundy gives in despite both of them already knowing the other’s name.

“As you already know, I am Captain. Number one hero and de facto leader of the Hero Tower.”

“Well, I’m Fundy Salmonidae,” he responds. “Underpaid secretary to President Schlatt.” Thankfully the comment makes the woman laugh instead of look at him with contempt. At least heroes, like most villains and a good majority of civilians, seem to be aware of Schlatt’s corruption. There are a lot of civilians that will start lecturing him on why Schlatt’s the best thing to ever happen to the Esempii when he makes that joke. All ‘he’s a great president!’ and ‘he should be honored to work under such an exceptional president’ and that he should ‘stop complaining’. It’s all nonsense if you ask him. Said civilians usually don’t have to deal with the tail end of Schlatt’s policies, aka the rich.

“Nice to meet you underpaid secretary to Schlatt,” Captain jokes and Fundy smiles. Maybe this won’t be so bad. “I will admit, Mr. Salmonidae,” Captain says, voice becoming solemn and professional. “I do have ulterior motives for inviting you out here today.” And there it is. Why can’t people just be upfront anymore? It’s always ‘ulterior motives’ this and ‘secret plan’ that. He swears the second he pays off his debt to Jester he’s not going to lie to people ever again.

He likes to pretend that it’s even possible to pay them all off.

“Do you?” Fundy says slowly, hands folding in his lap under the table.

“I will not use my power on you,” Captain assures him, voice stern, and Fundy isn’t able to hide the wince as she sees right through him. “I will not use my power on a civilian without permission.” She quickly tack on, “I will not be asking you to do that today Fundy.” Today doesn’t rule out the future. Best to still be careful.

“What is it you want to know?” Fundy asks cutting to the chase.

“I want to know something about Schlatt,” Captain asks. “More specifically, about the rumors surrounding his son.”

“Ah…”

“I need to know if they’re true. Any of them, really. The abuse, neglect, anything you think is accurate. We may not be able to call on the kid to testify against him, but your word should be just as good to get Schlatt put away for a long, long time. The kid deserves to have the man who did wrong by him get what he deserves. If you know anything, anything at all, I would sincerely appreciate you telling me. We all would, Toby especially.”

What does he say to this? He knows Toby is safe, not dead despite popular belief, and happy too, living with his best friend on the outskirts of Las Nevadas. Getting Schlatt arrested in by no means a bad thing, definitely more of a good thing really, but if they find out Toby’s still alive they might try to find him and he’s currently illegally using his powers to stop crime and regularly consorts with villains, something that will definitely get him a cell right next to Schlatt. Hopefully not next to, but they’d both be locked up in Pandora and that’s not what he wants to happen.

“I’m not the right person to ask,” Fundy admits with a sigh. “I never met the kid. Schlatt always said he was worried about him and was concerned over his safety so he wasn’t allowed out of the house much and since I’ve never been there...” He shrugged. There were times, very few and far between, that Schlatt would let Toby out. He’d follow Schlatt around the White House, never more than a step from his father’s shadow, and carry around the man’s papers and would, essentially, take over Fundy’s job for the day, part of it at least. Officially, it was so he could learn the ropes, but Fundy’s pretty sure Schlatt just used the ‘outings’ as tests or something. Fundy never interacted with Toby directly during those visits, but he was close enough to see the sorrow in his eyes, the longing and smothered hope everytime he caught sight of a door or window. How his fingers would twitch towards the security guards’ keys or when he’d watch as Schlatt would open a ground floor window without a screen as if to taunt him, to tell him his freedom was so close but impossible to reach. Just seeing the kid so desperate made him want to help. His mother always did say he had a big heart.

“Do you know who might be? The right person to ask, I mean.” Captain looked so hopeful he almost regretted not telling her what he knew, but he couldn’t risk it.

“Not really, no.”

She sighs, “Thank you for your cooperation.” He can see the disappointment in her eyes clear as day and he can’t help himself from trying to ease the guilt at least slightly.

“I’m sorry I can’t tell you more.” He really is, but he can’t be sure telling wouldn’t harm Toby in the long run. He’s happy now and as great as it would be to get Schlatt locked up he’d be risking too much to tell her.

“Don’t worry about it,” she assures him. “Also, as this isn’t an official investigation I would appreciate it if you could keep this conversation between us.”

“Of course,” Fundy responds. “I hope you’re able to find what you need.”

“Me too,” she whispers to herself, obviously not meant for him to hear. “Anyway,” she plasters a smile onto her face and her demeanor shifts to one more casual and friendly. “I wasn’t lying when I said I wanted to get to know you.” She thinks for a moment before seeming to settle on something and says, “I assume after the election you’ll continue to work as the president’s secretary regardless of who wins.” He nods. “So, what is your opinion on Eret? As a presidential candidate I mean.”

“I think he’s pretty cool. I like a lot of their planned reforms and I feel like they’ll actually come through with them,” Fundy responds. “She’s a very promising candidate.”

“I can’t help but agree,” Captain responds with a smile. “I may not know Eret very well, but we have spoken on occasion and I have high hopes for them as president.”

Fundy nods along and finally picks up his pastry to take his first bite and just like he thought, it’s delicious. Captain chuckles at his starstruck appearance. It’s no wonder Tommy comes here everyday, the pastries are amazing.

“Is this your first time trying Niki’s baking?”

He nods and catches some crumbs with his hand as they fall. “How is it so good?”

“That’s Niki’s baking for you.”

“Yeah, Niki’s baking is the best.” Fundy startles at the new voice, jumping a full inch out of his seat in surprise, and whips his head around to see Tommy standing behind him, grinning with a mug and dish in hand. “Hey, Fundy. Good to see you again.”

“Good to see you, Tommy,” Fundy echoes in greeting.

“And you’re Captain, right? Tommy asks Captain, gesturing towards her with his mug.

“That’s me. It’s nice to meet you... Tommy, was it?”

“That’s me,” Tommy confirms. “Do you mind if I sit with you for a bit?” Before Fundy can do anything other than a quick nod Tommy is shoving him aside and sitting beside him, dishes dropping onto the table with a clatter. He’s honestly kind of surprised they didn’t break. “Finally! My feet are killing me!” He takes a large gulp of his drink, downing half in one go, before smacking his lips together and letting out an over exaggerated breath. “So, what’s happening?”

“Not much,” Fundy responds, tail flicking behind him. “Captain is friends with my boss so she offered to take me out to eat.”

“That’s cool,” Tommy says, looking slightly disinterested in the conversation. “You’re cool by the way,” Tommy says to Captain offhandedly and takes another sip of his drink, a smaller one this time. “You’re a badass and aren’t a shitty person.”

“Thanks,” she chuckles.

“Anytime,” he says. “Also, call Siren a bitch for me. Thanks.” He doesn’t wait for Captain’s answer before thanking her and turning back to Fundy like nothing happened. “I love free food,” he says, making intense eye contact.

“Yeah?”

“Mhm,” he nods. “I *really* love free food.”

“I think he wants you to buy him some food,” Captain stage whispers, her hand held covering her mouth as if she was blocking Tommy from hearing her words.

“I want free food,” Tommy says and Fundy’s pretty sure he hasn’t blinked in at least a minute.

Fundy grabs a couple of primes from his pocket and slowly holds them out to the blonde. “Here?”

“Thanks!” Tommy snatches the money out of his hand and bolts out of his seat and right for the front counter, empty plate Fundy didn’t see him eating from, left behind. Where did his pastry go?

“I think he likes you,” Captain laughs, doing a poor job of hiding it behind her hand.

“Does he?” They’ve only met a couple other times and both were because he was a customer at Tommy’s job. He can hardly see how Tommy would think of some random customer as friend material.

She shrugs, “I’ve seen him around here from time to time and from what I can tell he isn’t the most open with new people, but you two seem to get along just fine.”

Fundy hums absentmindedly. Tommy wants to be his friend. He feels stupid for not realizing it earlier, it’s his job to spy on people and yet he couldn’t even realize when someone wants to be his friend. Jester would tell him to take advantage of the opportunity, hell he told him to make friends with him when this whole thing started, but Fundy can’t help but feel dread pooling in his gut. He should be happy. Tommy wants to be friends with him. He’ll be able to work towards earning Tommy’s trust and he’ll get all the information he needs for Jester and usually he would take it, the sooner he gets Jester the information and pays off his debts the better, but there was something about Tommy that made him hate the idea. Everytime he looked into his dull, gray eyes he would feel another wave of guilt wash over him. He’s used to feeling guilty, it was pretty common in his line of work, he’s just usually better at ignoring it.

Maybe it was because he could see how hurt Tommy was. How hard he was trying to pick up the pieces and how he was failing to put them back together, but still trying. His eyes spoke of a past filled with pain and suffering, but also of hope, clinging on like a man clings to a cliff after being shoved off the side, but Tommy isn’t on the cliff. Tommy is drowning in the water far below. He’s struggling against the waves for air and Fundy’s still trying to figure out if he’s winning or losing.

The last time Fundy saw Tommy he was winning. His head held high above the waves and he was swimming towards shore, but now it’s like the water has overtaken him and he’s struggling against the waves pulling him down. He doesn’t know what could have happened to him in that short time frame, but what he does know is that there was more that happened before they met, before he came to the Esempii even. Jester was curious about his past, to the point of something near obsession at times. The hunger to *know*, something the man was familiar with and Fundy is familiar with seeing, but information has never eluded him to this degree and that only made Jester more intrigued.

Fundy feared his own curiosity would overwhelm him the same.

He’d spent a lot of time around the man in the past few years and that need to know everything had rubbed off on him. It wasn’t to the same extremes, but he will admit his curiosity is a lot stronger than it used to be. Tommy’s past makes him curious partly because he knows what it’s like, to be pushed into the waves and have them crash over you time and time again, pulling you down to the point of no return. Where you’re struggling and desperate for help with no one there to give it and you will do whatever it takes to get out and

he wants to know what got Tommy to that point. When Fundy was in that place he was thrown a line and followed it back to Jester, that's how he broke free from the waves, and accepted the help without a thought to the consequences until it was too late. Now he has a lifetime's worth of debt and he's stuck clinging to the edge of the cliff, halfway to pulling himself up and halfway to falling to his doom with no hope of being saved a second time around. He'd be damned if he let go now.

"Fundy?" Fundy hums, only slightly startled, as he looks towards the teen sitting next to him. When did he get back? Was he so out of it he didn't notice? That's not good, it doesn't bode well for him as a spy if he's so easily snuck up on. "Are you alright?"

"Sorry, I'm fine. Just zoning out a bit," Fundy brushes off with a smile, but still the blatant worry in Tommy's eyes didn't diminish. Why does he care so much? "What were you saying?"

"I wanted to know if you were doing anything this weekend," Tommy says. "My friend's dragging me out and if you're there I'll have an excuse to ignore him."

Should he? He wants to be friends with Tommy, he really does, but he knows Tommy doesn't deserve this. Doesn't deserve having someone constantly betraying him by his side. But maybe it's alright, just this once, to do something that he wants.

"Sure, why not? Where are we meeting?"

"In front of the cafe," Tommy says and gestures to the front of the store. "I don't have a phone and we both know where it is so it's a pretty good meeting spot. That's good for you, right? It's not too far of a trip? We could pick a closer spot?" Tommy goes from confident to nervous over the course of a single sentence and Fundy was quick to answer.

"That works for me. Saturday?"

"Yup! Noon. I'll see you then?"

"Yeah, see you then." Tommy beams, eyes brighter blue than he's ever seen them, before scurrying away.

Captain and Fundy sit in silence for a long while, Captain seemingly deep in thought. "I should probably get going. Schlatt has a meeting with Eret soon and I need to get a few things ready."

"Of course," Captain nods and stands. "It was a pleasure meeting you, Fundy."

"And you too, Captain," Fundy responds, stumbling over his words before mentally cursing himself for the awkward response. Thankfully she only smiles and stretches out a hand for him to shake. He does so, subtly tucking his hand into his sleeve beforehand, and lets out a quiet breath of relief when his hand is returned to him without Captain ever opening her mouth.

“Have a good night, Fundy,” Captain says before waving to Niki behind the counter and leaving. Fundy lets out one more deep breath of relief before nodding awkwardly to Niki and making his own escape from the cafe. He needs to get Saturday cleared for a day off.

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Right away Captain could tell Fundy was uncomfortable around her. It made sense, most civilians are wary of her power. Everyone has something they don't want others to know, it's understandable. There are varying levels to how open someone was with their aversion to it, but she got pretty good at being able to tell. She didn't blame them, really, if she found out someone could force her deepest darkest secrets into the light just by holding her hand she'd probably avoid them too. It doesn't make her any less saddened to see a civilian so skittish around her. She's a hero, she's supposed to help people and make them feel safe, not this.

He relaxed overall as time went on, something she was thankful for, but only got more cautious of her power as the meal went on, culminating with her questions about Toby Schlatt when he placed his hands under the table out of her reach. Not that she would use her power on him. She doesn't use her power on civilians unless it's strictly necessary. Even then they have to sign a form and have a witness present to attest to their willing agreement beforehand. It's usually reserved for suspects and witnesses involved in time sensitive cases and victims who can't bring themselves to speak since her power not only senses the truth but, in some cases, can make it easier to say.

She smiled when Tommy walked in but didn't greet him since he technically, hopefully, doesn't know who Captain is and assumed Tommy wasn't going to come over because of that. Why would he walk over to a table of strangers when he's always so cautious of them? Instead Tommy walks over with his order and a bright grin on his face and inserts himself on the booth next to Fundy. She witnessed as Fundy tensed all over again, but greeted Tommy with familiarity. Fundy's reaction aside, Tommy was acting unlike she's ever seen him. He was bright and open and he didn't hesitate to bump his shoulder against Fundy's at one point. Puffy noticed the flinch Tommy did his best to hide and the pain in his eyes every time their shoulders brushed but she could tell Fundy didn't. He seemed to relax again over time, but seemed out of it compared to before.

“I wanted to know if you were doing anything this weekend,” Tommy says. “My friend's dragging me out and if you're there I'll have an excuse to ignore him.” It's not Wilbur. He would have been too excited to hide it. She and Niki would have been the first to know. She's not sure if Tommy has other friends she doesn't know about, which is likely considering she's only had one conversation with him and she didn't know he knew Fundy and neither did Niki or Wilbur since they would have mentioned it as she is their main source of ears when they want to talk about Tommy, but she has a feeling that wasn't the case. The fact that he seemed willing to go was another shocker. From what Wilbur told her he only went to Tubburger with him after he was bribed with free food. Was it because Fundy bought him food? Probably not. They probably hang out outside the cafe. Tommy is a very secretive person so it would make sense that they don't know about his other friends.

Fundy agreed to go and Tommy smiled wider than she'd ever seen him.

“Yeah, see you then!” Tommy ran out of the cafe and Captain couldn’t help but wonder what Tommy thought about her. She was hesitant to call them friends, their first and only conversation was too awkward and stilted, but acquaintances didn’t seem right either. A budding friendship perhaps? It was like they knew each other and didn’t at the same time and she couldn’t put her finger on why.

“I should probably get going.” Right, she was supposed to be getting to know Fundy not get lost in her head. She bids him goodbye and waves to Niki on her way out before heading to the Hero Tower. She really needs to get out of this suit. She loves the thing to death, wouldn’t have picked it otherwise, but gods is it uncomfortable to wear for so long.

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“What!” The pest cowers away from Bad as he paces, tail flicking in anger with every step. “How could they be so *stupid*! Those- those- muffin heads!”

“They failed?” Skeppy confirms, vacant look in his eyes as he focuses on the vines dancing around him.

“T-they did,” the pest repeats, head bowed away from Skeppy’s gaze. “The reports say they completed the hit, but the target was seen alive and well the next day and the gang was found dead a few hours later.”

“Useless,” Bad growls. “Not only did they *fail* but they lost us thirteen cadavers.”

“We will make more,” Skeppy responds. “We are far from short on supplies.”

“Useless,” Bad continues to mutter as he paces. “Useless! Send out another hit! Don’t stop until he’s dead! I want him dead!” The egg rises behind him and a vine lashes out at the pest, throwing it into the wall. It lands with a loud crack and falls to the ground motionless and two followers separate from the wall to put out the order, stepping over the body as if it weren’t there.

With a wave of Bad’s hand the vines set to work transforming it into a Cadaver, Bad continuing his enraged pacing.

“Useless,” Bad mutters. “Those bugs are useless without the Egg’s influence.”

“And we will help them,” Skeppy responds, the Egg’s vines twirling around his hand. “We will help them all find the freedom of the Egg.”

Cracking reverberates through the cavernous room as the pests’ bones snap back into place and in jerky movements, stands up. “We will free them all,” Bad repeats as the Cadaver walks over to a hole in the wall and joins the others of its kind at the ready, waiting for their orders to strike.

Tommy pov will return in the next chapter :)

Fun fact: Fox's use Earth's magnetic field to hunt.



# Chapter Sixteen

## Chapter Summary

Tommy hangs out with Wilbur then goes home and hangs out with Siren. They are definitely different people.

## Chapter Notes

Tw's:  
None

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The eyes are back.

Tommy scowls as he walks and does his best to ignore the feeling, shoving it into the back of his mind where he doesn't have to think about it. Yeah, it was nice to fight again, it's a great way to get rid of all his pent up anger and restless energy and shit, but he's good now. He's got a better life and a promising future and he's not about to fuck it all up just because some assholes got it into their head's it would be a good idea to kill him. He shoves his hands into his pockets and slumps forward as he walks as if that would make the eyes watching him go away.

He knows at least one of them is a spy for Jester, nothing could convince him the man doesn't have at least one tailing him. Once in a while he'll catch someone watching from an alley, but they tend to run off sooner or later, some fear driven fellow thief pulling them away with frantic whispers of Jester's list reaching his ears. He was pissed when he first heard of the list, he can take care of himself thank you very much, and had half a mind to stomp his way over to Las Nevadas and demand what the hell that's about, but now he's grateful for it. Once upon a time he would have seen it as pity, but now he's just glad he has one less thing to deal with.

The bell rings as he pushes through the door and Tommy plasters a smile on his face as he begins the walk to the counter to greet Niki. Wilbur stands next to the counter, sulking, but perks up when he sees him, a wide smile on his face. He did feel a *little* bad about rushing out the day before since he left before Wilbur got there, but not enough to regret it. He was *excited*, sue him!

“Tommy!”

“Hey Wilbur,” Tommy greets as Wilbur jogs the distance to meet him in the middle of the walk to the counter.

“I heard you made plans with a friend. I’m so proud,” Wilbur teases and as dramatically as always pretends to cry with his hands held over his heart. “I’m just so, so proud.”

“Oh piss off,” Tommy grumbles, shoving down his embarrassment. “Bitch.” At least now he knows for sure Niki and Wilbur gossip with each other about him. Something to file away for later.

“Aw, Tommy,” Wilbur coos. “No need to be embarrassed. I’m glad you’re making friends.”

“Yeah, I needed a new one. Gotta replace the shitty ones, asshole,” Tommy flips Wilbur off as he finally turns to Niki. “Hello Niki.”

“Hello Tommy,” she responds,” amusement coating her words.

“Today is an apple pie kind of day,” Tommy responds. “A whole one. With whipped cream.”

“Message received,” Niki jokes and turns on the hot chocolate machine to fill a cup while she disappears into the back room to grab his pie.

“Can I have some?” Wilbur asks, making shitty puppy dog eyes at him.

“No.”

“Please,” he asks again, widening his eyes further as if that would help.

“You’re shit at that.” He should know never to try going against the master of puppy dog eyes, he won’t fall for it.

“You’re so mean Toms,” Wilbur whines. “You’re going to make me cry.” Maybe if he were better at puppy dog eyes he would have given him some.

“Cry, bitch.” Wilbur pouts and flips him off while Tommy laughs.

“One hot chocolate and one apple pie with extra whipped cream,” Niki announces as she returns with a steaming hot apple pie covered in whipped cream and is that ice cream he sees?

“Oh fuck yeah.” He cheerfully takes the pie and deposits the primes in the tip jar and scurries away to his table with it like the gremlin he is. Niki and Wilbur laugh, but he ignores it in favor of eating the delicious sweet apples in pastry. It’s the closest thing he can get to eating gapples and in some ways even better. Yeah he misses the magic boost, but there’s no backlash afterward from the drop in magic or the adjustment period of getting used to being without it again, something that only gets shittier and shittier with every gapple he eats to push off the crash for later.

He takes his spoon and gathers a little of everything on it, filling, crust, ice cream, and whipped cream all in one bite, and shoves the entire thing in his mouth in all its steaming

golden glory. Delicious.

By the time Wilbur joins him at his table with a cup of coffee, aka this world's strength potion, in hand Tommy's already finished almost a fourth of the pie and, regrettably, nearing a full hunger bar. He ran to work that morning and took the long way to make sure his hearts were low enough to enjoy the delectable treat, but he didn't burn through enough of his hunger bar for him to finish it. Oh well, more for later then.

"How's work going?"

"Good. I've got that suit fitting tomorrow which is cool." He'll have to be careful. He doesn't want Wilbur to notice the rest of the pie going missing, it'll be suspicious, but there's no way in hell he's wasting so much golden goodness. Not when it's warm and there's still ice cream *and* whipped cream left.

"That sounds fun. Maybe I can swing by at some point, see if you're really as good as you say."

"Maybe," Tommy answers absentmindedly. If he ever finds the person who made apple pies he will swear his loyalty until the day he dies. In exchange for unlimited free pies of course.

"I can't wait to see how truly talented the great Theseus Minecr--"

"Oh my gods, a minecart's heading straight for us!" Tommy yells, pointing at the window Wilbur's back is to.

"A what--" Wilbur whips around, searching the road for a minecart aka car while Tommy shoves his pie into his inventory. He's going to sit on the roof and eat the entire thing no matter what. His mouth waters just thinking about the delicious apple pie. "I am so confused."

"Ha, loser."

"Why the fuck would a minecart be in the middle of L'Manburg?"

"They're all over the street, big man," Tommy responds with a shrug. "It's not my fault you're blind." Tommy gestures towards the wire-frame glasses Wilbur's wearing and takes a sip from his hot chocolate.

"I have shit day vision," Wilbur deadpans. "I'm not blind."

"Yeah you are," Tommy counters. "Why else would you have that shit on your face?"

"I have glasses because I need them to see."

"That's exactly what I just said, blind. Also, what the fuck do you mean by 'day vision'?" Tommy asks, using a weird voice to repeat Wilbur's words.

"I don't sound like that," Wilbur responds, affronted.

“I don’t sound like that’,” Tommy mocks in an even weirder voice. “Yes you do, now answer my question. The fuck does day vision mean?”

Wilbur rolls his eyes but accepts his defeat. “I see better in the dark, meaning at night, so when it’s light out my sight, day vision, is worse. It’s a phantom thing. Something about them being nocturnal or something.”

Tommy stares at Wilbur, silent, judging him with every fiber of his being before saying, “I don’t think day vision is a real thing, king. You just need to get your eyes checked.”

“I did. That’s why I have glasses,” Wilbur says slowly like he’s speaking to a child.

Tommy gasps in offense. “Do not speak down to me you heathen! I am your leader, a being far outweighing you in power and beauty. Do not treat me as some lower life form, bitch,” he says haughtily like some king from a couple hundred years ago. Although, none of the kings he’s met have ever spoken like that. Must be just a this world thing.

Wilbur snorts into his cup before taking a sip. “Sure child.”

“Fuck you!” Tommy shouts, rising to his feet, one hand on the table while the other jabs at Wilbur’s smug fucking face. “How dare thee insult me!”

“I apologize my king,” Wilbur responds, poorly hiding his smile as he pretends to be serious. Sarcastic. “How ever could I make up for doing such a thing?”

Tommy brings a hand to his chin as he thinks before an idea makes his eyes light up with mischief. Wilbur’s grin falters for a second, nervous for what was coming, but he hides it well. “The only way you can repay me is…” pause for dramatic effect, “by buying me an entire bowl of whipped cream!”

Wilbur sighs in relief before smiling at Tommy. “As you wish, my king.” Wilbur hops out of his seat and jogs over to the counter to grab the whipped cream while Tommy plops himself back into his seat. He loves whipped cream. What makes it better is since it’s technically a liquid it counts as a drink and this doesn’t count towards his hunger bar which *means* he can have as much as he wants!

“Whipped cream!” Tommy cheers as a bowl is set before him. He doesn’t hesitate to shovel about half the bowl into his mouth before taking a second to breathe.

“How you haven’t choked to death yet I will never know.”

“Fuck you.”

Wilbur doesn’t respond, shaking his head with a smile, and rests his head on his hand as Tommy continues eating, sipping at his coffee. Tommy pretends not to notice as the happiness slips away and is replaced by sadness and worry mixed with a puzzled expression of confusion like he’s trying to figure out what he’s looking at but the words to describe it are just out of reach.

Tommy ignores the expression. If there's anything he's good at it's acting oblivious, it's what people expect really. For him not to realize what he's doing or what others are doing. It's just better that way sometimes. Either way, he's not going to read into it. If he ignores it then it'll go away. That's how this works. It's one of the things that have kept him alive until this point though it may also be why his life was in danger other times. Whatever, Wilbur will get bored of him soon anyway and he'll leave just like his brother did and he won't have to worry about it anymore.

No, fuck off. He's not thinking like that anymore. He's in a new place with new people and a new chance to do things the right way. He's not going to fall back into the self destructive thinking that made him push people away in his old life. He's not going to go back to how things were before. Never again.

"Thanks Willbitch!" Tommy says, maybe a little too loudly, and thankfully the expression is wiped from Wilbur's face, replaced by a cool amusement that seemed faker than it did before. Wilbur's always been a worry wart. That's probably it. He's probably just worried about something small that doesn't have any real consequence and nothing to do with him. It's nothing to worry about. "You have re-earned my friendship and are no longer on my hit list."

"You have a hit list?" Wilbur laughs.

"Yes," Tommy enunciates, head nodding proudly. "A very short one, with the name Wilbur crossed out at the top. That is the only name."

"You created a hit list just for me?"

"Mhm, your name is crossed out," Tommy repeats. "For now."

"I'll just have to make sure it stays that way then."

"Yes. I can be bought with whipped cream."

"I'll keep that in mind," Wilbur laughs. "Maybe I should start carrying it around with me just in case, yeah?"

"No, that's disgusting, whipped cream must be coldified."

"I don't think-"

"Cold-i-fied-," Tommy repeats, making intense eye contact. "Coldified."

"Got it, coldified." Tommy nods, proud of his win, and shoves the last spoonful of whipped cream into his mouth. He looks up at the tv Niki keeps muted in the corner, the news playing, covering the murder by the docks, his murder, and checks the time in the corner of the screen.

"I should probably get going," Tommy says and stands, garbage collected from the table and in hand. "Got work to do and all that."

"See you tomorrow Tommy," Wilbur says and waves, walking towards the exit. Tommy throws out his garbage and with a wave and a call of goodbye to Niki exits after him.

When Tommy returns to Clem's it's to a note on the counter saying she had an appointment with a friend to make and that she'd be gone for a few hours. He sets it aside with a sigh. Clementine always seemed to be out lately. Whenever he asks about where she's been she's vague with her answers and he can tell that she's leaving things out. He doesn't press it though. It's her business and Prime knows he hides things from her.

He puts it all out of his mind and grabs his broom. He sweeps up everything on the floor, something that always seemed to take longer than he expects, and puts all the threads into a pile in the back room, out of sight. He'll pick them up later.

Once that's done he sits down in his favorite chair and pulls over a shirt he's been embroidering. Clementine did the fitting, but asked him to do the finer details to which he happily obliged.

The skyline darkened with every stitch and by the time he was finished the sun had set far beyond the horizon and it was long past his working hours. It's not the first time he's worked past his allotted hours, and it won't be the last, but it is the first time Clementine hasn't at least tried to get his attention to send him home.

"Clem?" He finishes putting away his supplies and dusts off his hands, walking into the front room to check for her. The door is closed but unlocked and there was nothing out of place. He checks the dressing room, just in case, and again finds nothing so he turns his attention towards the stairs and by extension, Clementine's apartment. He hesitates at the bottom step before making himself ascend the staircase. It's not like he hasn't been up there before, he's gone up more than a few times, but usually it was with Clementine's express permission and he didn't want to upset her by going somewhere he might not be allowed.

"Clementine?" he calls out when he's closer to the top.

"Tommy?" a surprised voice responds and Tommy turns the corner and jogs up the rest of the stairs to see Clementine wobbling around by the stove. "Is something wrong? I thought you left hours ago."

"Ah, no," he responds. "I haven't left yet. Worked past my hours again."

"Really? I could have sworn you weren't there..." she mutters, looking down in confusion as she slowly stirs a spoon in her tea.

"I just wanted to make sure you got in all right," Tommy says. "I'm sorry for disturbing you. I'll just lock up and go home." He ducks his head under the clearing at the top of the staircase and starts back down the stairs.

"Oh, Tommy?" Clementine calls and Tommy turns back, hand still on the railing and a few steps down.

"Yeah?"

"I'm sorry I didn't realize you were still here," she says. "And that I didn't lock up. I could have sworn I did."

“It’s alright Clementine,” Tommy responds, a soft smile on his face. “Why don’t you get some rest, yeah? You sound tired.”

“I’ll do that,” Clementine responds. “Thank you Tommy. I don’t suppose I can convince you to take the day off tomorrow, could I?”

“Not a chance,” Tommy laughs and Clementine joins in with her soft chuckle. He hesitates for a moment before stealing his nerves and forcing himself to ask, “but, um, do you think I could take off early? On Saturday, I mean.”

“Of course! Go on! Take the whole day off if you’d like,” Clementine smiles. “You’ve earned it.”

“I’ll still come in for the morning shift,” Tommy denies. “But thanks, Clem.”

“Anytime Tommy. Now shoo! You should've been home hours ago.” She shoo’s him towards the stairs and he laughs, ducking his way down the first few steps, and waves behind him as he takes them two at a time to the bottom. He finishes putting everything in its place before gathering his stuff, including the scarf Clementine gifted him, and shuts the lights before locking the door and braving the chilly night air home.

The eyes follow him closely, both malicious and observant, and Tommy keeps them in the back of his mind as he walks. There is no point in avoiding them or trying to lead them away, not when they already know where he lives, so he just continues on like normal.

Getting used to the eyes and being able to tell the difference between the intentions of the people watching has its perks. Knowing who’s watching him and what to expect from them is one of them, each nicknamed accordingly of course.

The most common of his watchers is One. They aren’t malicious from what he can tell, but they’re definitely the most committed to the whole spying on him thing. Then there’s Five, Two through Four aren’t relevant with how sporadic they appear, who he can tell is experienced and has some level of ill intent, towards him or otherwise, but he knows they won’t hurt him, for now at least. The most recent being the MurderBoys. This one is more a category than a single person. The people who shot him from the roof fall into that category and anyone else who watches him with the intent to murder him are included.

Yes, the names are shit and not creative in the slightest, but he couldn’t give less of a fuck about it.

Currently he’s sure there are MurderBoys on his tail, but he doesn't think they’re going to attack yet. He’s gotten a pretty good instinct for these things over the years, another of the reasons he managed to survive as long as he did on the Smp, and this isn’t the same feeling he got the night they attacked. He’s still got some time.

His apple pie sits idly in his hot bar, ready to be consumed, and Tommy sends a sad look at his hunger bar. Only half a symbol had faded out and his hearts were completely full meaning he wouldn’t be able to enjoy his pie to the fullest, only a few bites at most. That will not do. He stops for a moment to think, eyes mentally tracing his path home, before he gets an idea.

How has he not thought of this before? The roofs! He can hop across the roofs! What better way is there to wear down his hunger bar?

Tommy jogs to the nearest alley, ignoring the hissing of a cat as it crashes through a metal trash can in its haste to get away, and pulls himself onto a fire escape. The metal creaks and wobbles as he pulls himself over the side and nearly crashes to the ground as he thuds onto the first level, rusty bolts protesting at the sudden change in weight with a groan. Tommy ignores it and scurries up to the roof, metal steps bending under his feet, and grins as he reaches the roof. This really is the best idea. The best he's ever had, dare he say.

He turns to the nearest roof and stares it down, grin not dropping for a second, and readies himself before sprinting full force towards the edge. He leapt at the last second, soaring through the air in a way that felt like freedom, like a weight he'd forgotten was there had been lifted off his chest and he was sure he was about to take off into the sky never to be seen again. His mood drops ever so slightly as his feet touch down on the neighboring roof, but excitement is quick to take over as he runs for the next one.

He lets out a whoop of joy as he lifts off to the next roof, arms spread to the side, lungs filling with glorious air as the wind tosses his hair all over, his eyes covered by the gold, white stricken strands. He laughs as his feet hit the roof, knees bending to absorb the impact, and doesn't hesitate to shoot off for the next one. Jump after jump Tommy feels pure joy flooding through his veins, practically flying from roof to roof with every jump. His apartment comes into view in the distance sooner than usual, roof jumping being faster than walking and having only started jumping roofs after entering Lower L'Manburg, and he adjusts his course to end on his building.

He touches down on his roof and bends over with his hands on his knees, panting heavily to catch his breath, but not once does the smile slip from his face. Not only was his hunger bar a lot lower than it was earlier, but it was quicker and fun. It made a dark empty part of his soul sing for joy from where he shoved it down farther than he'd care to check, the cold feeling he associated with it dripping away as it's replaced by pure elation. He may not be able to fly, but that was pretty damn close.

Tommy happily collapses onto the roof, limbs splayed across the gravel covered cement, and stares up at the sky as he breathes. The stars were dim and hard to see, but if he focused enough he could just make out the familiar shapes from his home. This world's constellations are different from the one he grew up with, but the stars themselves didn't change. The same night sky he's spent years staring up at as the world passed by around him.

Once his breath didn't burn in his lungs and he was breathing normally again he sat himself up against the metal cold box thing and pulled out his pie, and the spoon he 'borrowed' from Niki's. The pie is steaming in his grasp, ice cream barely melted across the top with just enough whipped cream left for a bit in every bite, and with glee he takes a large bite.

It's just as delicious as it was earlier.

About halfway through what's left of his pie there's the sound of scattering gravel and Tommy doesn't need to turn to know Siren is walking over with his near soundless footstep.



“Bitch,” Tommy greets and shoves another overly large bite of pie into his mouth.

“Hello to you too,” Siren says, amusement obvious as he sets himself down next to Tommy with a good foot or two of distance of course. “What’cha got there?”

“Pie,” Tommy answers.

“I can see that,” he laughs. “What kind?”

“Apple.”

“Is it good?”

“I would sell my soul for this pie.” Did he actually? The only reason he’s in this universe to get this pie is because gods helped him which is commonly associated with selling souls for deals which leaves the question, did he sell his soul to get here? He really should ask about that.

Siren chuckles, “Good to know.” Tommy nods and shoves another bite into his mouth to avoid talking. Only a quarter of the pie is left when Siren speaks up again, hiding away his quizzical expression. “You didn’t like me much when we first met. Heroes in general really. Have I managed to convince you we’re not all that bad?” He sounded like he was trying to make a joke of it and failing miserably, his laugh was too forced and he sounded too worried about his answer to really find it funny.

Tommy meets Siren’s eyes, examining them for some type of intent of manipulation tactic behind the question, but all he can find is hope and earnest intentions and painful familiarity. Those were Wilbur’s eyes, his Wilbur’s, before he became president and he began his downward spiral. A wave of sadness overtakes him and it’s a struggle not to wrap his arms around Siren and never let go, but he shoves it away. This is not his brother, hell it’s not even Wilbur, he’s just some random hero who decided he was worth a couple hours of time a week and as much as he bitches and complains he’s glad Siren stopped to check on him that first time. It’s nice having a friend he didn’t know before.

Tommy breaks eye contact and drops his eyes to his food. “You’re not bad I suppose,” Tommy answers. “I still don’t like heroes though.” He can’t. Not with all the bad he has associated with the word alone. Good things don’t happen to heroes.

“That’s alright. I’m just glad you don’t think badly of me.”

“Oh no, I do,” Tommy responds, falsely serious. “You’re a bitch and a wrong’un and I hope you die.” Siren barks out a laugh and Tommy can’t help but join. Siren isn’t all that bad. Yeah, he thinks heroes are shit, but Siren’s okay.

Siren sticks around even after Tommy finishes his pie. They just relax on the roof, not saying a word, as they watch the skyline. It was nearing morning, and he could tell Siren was getting tired, but still he didn’t leave. It’s still a bit shocking sometimes to see how reliant this world is on sleep. They actually need it instead of just using it to skip through nights and shit. The only person he can think of who was the same is George, he was always sleeping. And while

he can get a little pissy if he's gone too long without skipping a night, he's so used to it now that he can go ages without a wink of sleep.

"You're tired," Tommy says, breaking the calm silence.

"I'm not," Siren slurs, half asleep.

"You are," Tommy repeats and nudges his shoulder. He's quick to pull back, his own shoulder catching fire in his brain, but it does the trick. Siren blinks a few times as he sits up, seemingly confused as he tries to make sense of the situation. "You should go rest. It's not safe to sleep on the roof."

Tommy's lip quirks up at the line he throws back at the man and after a second Siren seems to realize what he did and smiles blearily. "Yeah, I should get going. My family will be worried." Siren stands, rolling his joints and stretching from laying on the concrete roof for too long, and smiles. "See you later Tommy."

"See ya." Siren jumps away and once he's out of sight Tommy sighs and collects the pie tin and spoon, sending them to his inventory, before climbing down the fire escape and into his room. There was still about an hour before the sun rose and he had to get ready to go so he decided to lay in bed until then. He relaxes into the mattress, sighing at the comfort, and lets his mind drift.

Not ten minutes into mentally scanning through the previous day he bolts upright and goes over the conversation again, disbelieving. There's no way he heard him right, right? He was just hearing things. There's no way he heard him right.

As much as he tried to deny it, deep down he knew that he wasn't mistaken and that he heard Wilbur loud and clear, even if he was too distracted to realize it in the moment. He couldn't deny what he heard and what it meant. Wilbur somehow knew his name. His *full* name that he hasn't said once in the entirety of his time in this universe.

Wilbur called him Theseus Minecraft.

## Chapter End Notes

Just some fun facts about flowers.

Flowers can hear buzzing bees.

Some flowers are known to move.

Flowers emit a humming noise inaudible to the human ear.

# Chapter Seventeen

## Chapter Summary

Tommy gets lunch and does a suit fitting.

## Chapter Notes

Tw's:  
None

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

How the fuck does he know his name? Tommy paces back and forth as he thinks back over his interactions with this world's Wilbur. He knows he didn't say his name. Innit he would have understood, he knows he refers to himself in third person from time to time and while he doesn't remember a specific time he did in this world he wouldn't be surprised if he didn't realize he was doing it, but Wilbur called him Theseus and he started to say Minecraft. It was a little hard to hear over his shouting, but he heard him, it just took a while to register. He knows he wouldn't have told Wilbur either of those names, refuses to acknowledge them as a whole, so how the fuck does he know?

As far as he's aware Wilbur's a civilian, like him, and so the only way he'd be able to get that information is through hacking or making a deal with Jester. Or a power. Jester's prices are steep and he can't find any motivation for Wilbur even wanting to go to Jester for something he doesn't really even know exists, who sells their soul based on a suspicion that someone isn't telling you their full name, and he doesn't think it's a power thing so that must mean he looked into him.

Okay, so Wilbur looked into him. Why? Routine background check? Rich people do that stuff, right? To make sure they're not going to get kidnapped and ransomed or used for their money or something, right? Nah, no one could deal with Wilbur long enough to ransom him. He's too annoying. So what could it be?

Tommy lets out a deep breath, stopping his pacing, and runs his fingers through his hair. "Fuck this," he mutters and walks into the kitchen. He's not going to think about this right now. He's got work soon and he has to start getting ready to go. He'll just have to show Wilbur that he knows things too then he'll put all of this out of his mind. Actually, that's a pretty good idea. Look out Wilbur Soot because Tommy Innit is calling you out, bitch!

Tommy smiles to himself as he locks the door and starts the walk to Clem's. Next time he sees Wilbur he'll call him Wilbur Soot and it'll show him just how powerful the great Tommy Innit can truly be!

Tommy marches his way to work, nearly running over a puppy as he goes, making him stop and hug the puppy while crying for about ten minutes much to the owner's annoyance, and arrives just in time for his shift.

"Oh, Clementine!" He sing-songs. "I'm here!"

"Hello dear," she greets. "How are you?"

"I am great," Tommy responds.

"You're doing that fitting today, right?" Clementine asks and shuffles through a stack of request forms. "Here it is. Quackity?"

"Yup, suit fitting."

"Alright. It looks like the fitting cuts into your lunch break a bit so you're welcome to leave early so you have enough time to eat."

"I don't need to. I'm sure I'll be fine without it." It's not like his hunger bar is low enough to worry about.

"I insist," Clementine presses. "Take the time to hang out with those friends of yours."

"Thanks Clem," Tommy responds with a soft smile. She nods and Tommy gets together everything he needs for the suit fitting, there wasn't much. A base he made from what he remembered from the suit he made Quackity back on the Smp, but slightly bigger in case of adjustments, some pins, a measuring tape in case anything needs to be remeasured and remade, and a notepad and pen for notes. He spent the morning dealing with customers and doing a few quick things here and there and left early for lunch like Clementine said to. The walk was quick, but chilly so he wrapped the scarf a little tighter around his neck.

According to Wilbur this world has something called 'seasons'. This world is, for some reason, *round* instead of flat like it should be and when it *spins*, because it spins for some gods forsaken reason, the base temperatures for different areas change. The first time Wilbur brought it up he'd laughed thinking Wilbur was messing with him, seriously there was no way something like that was true, but apparently he wasn't joking. Weird as shit. Seriously, the sun and moon move and the world is flat, common knowledge, but not in this weird ass place. *No*, they have to be *different* and *special*. There's no seasons on the Smp because everything's flat and nothing changes which is so much better than all this round shit. Just be normal like you're supposed to be nature!

Currently, according to Wilbur, it's becoming fall and after that is winter which means it's going to be cold for a while. He may need to invest in a coat. Who's he kidding Clementine would make him one before she let him buy one. Maybe he'll make his own. It's been a while since he made a heavy coat, the last one being Tubbo's, and it was a lot of fun. Though the

fluff did get everywhere and he did spend months cleaning it out of his house which wasn't fun. Eh, he'll just make it at the shop since he's got to clean the place anyway. It's a fucking pig sty in there sometimes with all the fucking fabric scraps and threads everywhere.

The wind blows strongly as Tommy opens the door to the cafe, the glass door whipping around to smack the side of the building, and he definitely doesn't struggle trying to get it closed.

"Hey Niki," he calls as he fixes his scarf from where it had gotten tangled around his neck by the wind.

"Hey Tommy," Niki responds. "Early again I see."

"Yeah, I have a fitting that cuts into my lunch break so Clem let me head out early. Here's your spoon by the way." Tommy grabs the spoon he used to eat his pie from his back pocket, from his inventory, and holds it out to her. "I borrowed it to finish my pie yesterday."

"So I see," she says and shakes her head to push away her surprise. "From what I hear you have a knack for making things disappear and apparently that applies to making things appear as well."

"I am a magician you know," Tommy responds, an idea starting to form.

"Oh really?" Niki asks, arms crossed with a disbelieving smile on her face.

"Mhm, the very best."

"Let's see it then," she challenges. "I've always loved magic."

"Prepare to be amazed Niki for there is none better than I when it comes to magic." Tommy waves his hands around slowly, spoon held in full view, then quickly slams his hands together, twisting the one holding the spoon away so it's hidden before sending it to his inventory and shows his empty palms. Tommy smiles proudly at Niki's utter amazement and waves his hands around a bit more before pretending to throw something in the air and 'catches' the spoon in the opposite hand. Tommy bows, holding out the spoon, with a smug grin and Niki lightheartedly rolls her eyes.

"I am pleasantly surprised," she says and takes the spoon, carefully dropping it into a plastic bin by her feet full of dishes. Huh, did she always wear those gloves? He kind of remembers them, whatever, none of his business.

"Niki," Tommy says in joking offense, hand over his heart. "I can't believe you doubted my skills in the art of magic! It's so truly upsetting."

"Not *doubt*," she denies with a smile. "Just, didn't fully believe."

"How could you Niki," Tommy says sadly, slowly shaking his head in disappointment. "Betrayed by my dearest friend."

"Ooh, betrayal! What did I miss?" Wilbur asks, jogging up to the counter.

“Niki,” Tommy says accusingly to Niki’s amusement. “Didn’t believe in my magic skills.” Wilbur snorts and Tommy stares at him, affronted. “How dare you! I happen to be *amazing* at magic.”

“I’ll believe it when I see it,” Wilbur scoffs.

“Niki? Spoon,” Tommy says without looking away from Wilbur and holds out a hand. Niki gleefully drops the spoon from before in his hand and Tommy proceeds to do an absolutely spectacular display of magic leaving Wilbur gobsmacked at his unparalleled skills. He even ends the amazing performance by making the spoon disappear before pulling it out from behind one of Wilbur’s ears. A stroke of genius really. “See? *Amazing*.”

“Okay, I have to admit that was pretty cool,” Wilbur says, looking properly amazed this time.

“Why thank you,” Tommy responds, bowing low, and hands Niki back the spoon with a flourish of his hand.

“Why thank you master magician,” Niki grins and reaches for the spoon. Her smile seems to get brighter as her fingers wrap around the spoon and she drops it back into the bin. Wait, where did her gloves go? She must’ve taken them off during his amazing performance. “So, what’s on the menu today?”

“Hot chocolate, as always,” Tommy smiles. “And...cherry cheesecake.”

“Coming right up.”

“You have that fitting today, right?” Wilbur asks.

“Yup, after lunch,” Tommy answers as he sets the primes on the counter.

“Can I come?”

“Why would you want to do that?” Tommy asks, looking at Wilbur like he said something weird, which he did.

“I meant what I said yesterday,” he responds. “I want to see where you work and if you’re really as good at sewing as you say.” His voice turns humorous towards the end.

Tommy stares at Wilbur, long enough for him to start shifting uncomfortably, before sighing. “Fine. But stay out of the way, okay? I won’t have you upsetting my customers.” Tommy jabs his finger at Wilbur as he speaks, Wilbur putting his hands up and nodding frantically.

“Good.”

“One cherry cheesecake and hot chocolate.” Niki places the food on the counter, the hot chocolate piled high with whipped cream, and Tommy beams, grabbing at the sweet treats.

“Thanks Niki,” Tommy calls and runs to his seat. Wilbur talks with Niki for a bit while Tommy eats, looking very excited about something, and walks over after Tommy’s finished and he doesn’t have much longer left before he has to leave. “Wilbur.”

“Tommy.” Wilbur reaches for his coffee, having put it down before he sat down, but Tommy gets to it first and snatches it away. “Hey! Give that back!” Wilbur lunges for it, but Tommy holds it out of reach.

“No, it’s mine!”

“No, it isn’t!” Wilbur grabs for his cup again, but Tommy holds it out of reach. He’ll have to pry this coffee from his cold dead hands if he wants it back.

“Catch!” Tommy yells and pretends to throw it away from the table, sending it to his inventory the split second Wilbur looks away to see where it was falling before it hits the ground.

Wilbur looks back in confusion upon not seeing it hit the ground, or a person, and sees Tommy’s empty hands. “Where the fuck did it go?” He searches for the coffee, even going so far as to look under the table, but Tommy knows he’s not going to find it and shoves down a smirk.

“I don’t know,” he shrugs instead.

Wilbur sighs. “I didn’t even get to have any,” he whines. “I’ll be right back.” Wilbur peels himself out of his seat while Tommy snickers and walks over to order himself another cup, all slumped over and sad over not having any coffee. Tommy waits until Wilbur almost has his new cup in hand before getting up, summoning the coffee from his inventory and detouring to pass right behind Wilbur as he walks, and heads for the door. “I’ve got anothe- what the fuck?”

Tommy takes a sip of his coffee, smiling wide as the rush hits his system. Prime, he loves this stuff. “Hurry up slowpoke, you’re going to make me late!” Tommy taunts while walking backwards towards the door then turns and starts walking away as Wilbur yells, laughing to himself.

“How the fuck did you do that?” Wilbur asks, breathing heavy from the sprint to catch up to Tommy halfway to the corner. “Also, how could you leave me like that? I’m offended.” Wilbur holds the back of his hand to his head feigning death only for his other hand to bring up his coffee cup so he can take another sip even in his fake-dead state.

“You’re a shit dead person you know,” Tommy laughs. “Dead people can’t drink coffee.”

“I’m alive!” Wilbur yells, returning from the dead. “I can’t live without coffee.”

“Like I said shit dead person. If you’re dead you can’t drink coffee, but at that point it doesn’t really matter, does it?” Tommy responds.

“It is what keeps me alive,” Wilbur says like he’s just told him the secrets of the universe.

“So all I have to do is take that away to kill you? Sweet.” Tommy takes another sip of his stolen coffee, ignoring Wilbur’s glare for drinking what was supposed to be his, and merrily continues his way down the street.

“How *did* you do that? Is it something to do with your power?” Wilbur asks.

“Huh? What do you mean?”

“The magic stuff. And making the coffee disappear. Do you have an illusion power or something? I was thinking something with emotions cause of your eyes, but illusions would make sense too.”

That’s hard to explain. He can’t exactly tell Wilbur that the reason his eyes change color is because his mother is a god and he inherited her magic eyes, the galaxy in her eyes changes to show her emotions like his do, and while he can do things this world would *consider* a power he’s doesn’t technically have one so the best thing to do in this situation would be to tell a little white lie.

“I don’t have one.”

Wilbur chokes on his drink, hitting his chest with his fists as he coughs. “I’m sorry?”

“I don’t have a power,” Tommy repeats with a shrug. It’s not a lie since his inventory and all that is left over magic from his universe so, again, technically not a power.

“Well shit...” Wilbur says. “I’m sorry for asking.

“Eh, I don’t care,” Tommy responds, waving him off and taking another sip.

“No, it’s rude to ask people about their powers and I did it anyway. I’m sorry, truly. I guess I just got a little too curious,” Wilbur says sheepishly.

“Seriously, I don’t give a fuck. Can’t blame you for being curious.” Wilbur sighs, but drops it.

Wilbur clears his throat. “Wow, you really walk all this way every day?” Wilbur asks with an awkward laugh. “I don’t think I’d be able to do it.”

“Oh please,” Tommy responds. “This’s got *nothing* on my walk home.” It really isn’t that far, but he accepts the change in conversation if it means Wilbur stops apologizing.

“Is it really that far?” Wilbur asks.

“I live in Lower L’Manburg,” Tommy deadpans. “What do you think?”

“Oh yeah,” Wilbur realizes. “Guess that is a whole district away.”

“Mhm,” Tommy nods as the shop comes into view. Tommy jogs the rest of the distance, Wilbur hurrying behind after he realizes Tommy was leaving him behind, and he shoves open the door. “We have arrived! Oh, Clementine! I brought a friend!” he sing-songs as he enters the store.

“Oh, hello,” she says as she enters the room. “I was just about to head out, I’m glad I caught you.” She sets her purse on the counter and starts shuffling over to Wilbur. “And who might



you be?"

"That's Willbitch." Wilbur glares at Tommy before turning to Clementine with a smile.

"It's Wilbur, actually."

"Ah, Wilbur. I've heard a lot about you." Clementine grasps Wilbur's hand in both of hers and gives them a light shake up and down.

"Have you now?" Wilbur asks, sending a smug look at Tommy. "All good things I assume?"

"Sometimes, he's fond of complaining," she responds light heartedly, joining Tommy in laughing at Wilbur's offended look though she was a lot nicer about it. "Don't worry dear. He cares about you a great deal."

"I do not," Tommy protests.

"Oh, yes you do. Don't try to deny it," she says, wagging her finger at Tommy. "The way you talk about him makes me think you two were brothers." Tommy's smile falters for a split second, something he hopes no one notices, and moves on like nothing happened.

"Don't say that, I will cry," Wilbur responds, pretending to wipe a tear from his eyes. And if that wasn't a shot in the heart. Wilbur used to joke around saying that exact thing every time someone would point it out even though they actually are brothers. Or were.

Tommy clears his throat and forces a smile on his face. "Wilbur wanted to see some of the stuff I've made."

"How lovely! You two go have fun, I owe a friend lunch and won't be back for a bit. You'll be alright on your own?"

"I know I'll be," Tommy says with a smile. "Don't know about Will though, we'll have to wait and see."

"Why won't I be fine?" Wilbur asks.

"Because I'll have stabbed you with a knitting needle," Tommy responds.

"Don't worry dear," Clementine assures Wilbur. "We don't have any knitting needles." Wilbur breathes a theatrical sigh of relief. "But I'd be wary of the sewing needles." The look of terror returns, only partially pretend, and Tommy cackles.

"Anyway, I've got that fitting in ten-ish minutes and after that it's smooth sailing."

"Alright then, I'll leave you to it." She smiles and grabs her bag, briefly checking to make sure she has everything, before shuffling out the door.

"She seems nice," Wilbur says.

“She is,” Tommy nods. “Hurry up, we don’t have long before the appointment.” Tommy walks into the back and Wilbur hesitates at the door. “Come on. I’m the only employee. No one’s going to yell at you for being in the back room.” Tommy waves him forward and Wilbur rolls his eyes before walking through the doorway.

Tommy leads him over to a dress on a dress form. The corset top had a few loose threads on the sleeves and the skirt’s embroidery wasn’t finished yet, but it was close enough to done that he didn’t mind Wilbur seeing it. “Someone commissioned it for something called a ‘renaissance faire’ the other day. I’ve looked into them. They seem pretty cool.” They’re also kinda similar to the Smp with the armor and shit which is also pretty cool. There’s a lot of fake information though. Who puts fermented spider eyes in a potion of poison? Everyone knows the fermented spider eyes are for potions of weakness and the regular ones are for poison. Then, to make the potions really do some damage, *then* you add the fermented spider eyes into the poison potion to get a potion of harming. Come on people. This is common knowledge. You don’t need to work in a drug van to know how potions work.

“It’s amazing,” Wilbur whispers, getting closer to the dress. “You really made this? All by yourself?”

“Mostly,” Tommy shrugs. “Clem did help me a bit with the corset since I’d never made one before, but I think it turned out pretty well.”

“This must have taken ages,” Wilbur says, still inspecting the dress with awe.

“Tell me about it,” Tommy scoffs, smiling. “My hand hasn’t cramped that bad since I first started sewing.” Making all those uniforms for the war really did a number on his hands. He remembers having to ice them for days after all that, something that was in short supply at the time. They could barely leave L’Manburg safely to get things nearby, let alone make the trip all the way to the Arctic and back. One of the reasons he ran out of dye by the time he got to Fundy’s. Not that it mattered really, Fundy ended up really liking it.

Wilbur looks confused for a second before realization hits him. “You sewed it all *by hand*?”

“Yeah, how else would I do it?” Tommy asks with furrowed brows.

“Use a sewing machine,” Wilbur answers slowly like the answer is obvious.

“Those fucking devil machings? Fuck no.”

“Why not? It would make everything a lot faster.”

“Do you know how fucking loud those thigs are? How am I supposed to enjoy myself and relax with all that racket! And those needles? They’re moving so fast it’ll sew up my arm instead of the fabric! I’m not going anywhere near those things,” Tommy huffs, arms crossed.

“That only makes this, like, ten times cooler,” Wilbur responds and steps away from the dress. “Next time I have to dress up for a work event I’m definitely coming here.”

“I’ll hold you to that, big man,” Tommy says, sending finger guns his way. “Now, I need to get ready for my customer.” Wilbur gestures for him to do so and Tommy grabs everything he prepared that morning. Roughly five minutes later the bell rings and Quackity walks in with a big smile on his face.

“Tommy!” Quackity exclaims as he walks in, arms out to the side in a grand gesture. “How you doing, my man?”

“I’m good,” Tommy responds with a smile. “Are you ready for your fitting?”

“I am more than ready, my friend,” Quackity responds. “I am very excited.”

“Glad to hear it,” Tommy says.

“Okay, now how does this work?” Quackity asks.

“Hey Q,” Wilbur greets and Quackity seems surprised for a second before a grin even larger than before splits across his face. In his eyes on the other hand there was the slightest hint of annoyance that even Tommy struggled to see. Tommy narrowed his eyes at the sight.

“Wilbur! What are the odds man? You here for a fitting too?”

“Nah, I just decided to tag along after lunch,” Wilbur responds. “I never got to see Tommy’s work so I decided, why not?”

“It’s pretty cool,” Quackity says. “I saw some of the stuff he was working on before and man was it cool.”

“I know right? Tommy showed me a dress he’s working on earlier and it was beautiful. I wouldn’t even know where to begin making something like that.” Tommy pretends he found something he was looking for and sets a small box on the counter a little louder than usual to get their attention.

“Everything’s set, are you ready to go?”

“Yup! Where do you want me?”

“I’ve got a base suit here if you could put that on,” Tommy says and hands over the base.

“There’s a changing room right through there.” Tommy points to a room and Quackity nods, taking the clothes from his hands.

“Thanks!” Quackity disappears into the room and Tommy fixes up his station.

“Sorry about that, Tommy,” Wilbur says. “I didn’t mean to distract him and get in the way of your work.”

“It’s alright,” Tommy responds. “It’s not that big of a deal.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah, it’s fine, big man,” Tommy assures him. It was a bit annoying, yeah, but not that big of a deal really.

“Is this right?” Quackity asks as he walks out of the changing room.

“Yeah, that looks good,” Tommy responds and gestures to the raised platform. “Could you?”

“Yup, here?” Tommy nods as Quackity steps onto the platform.

“What should I do?” Wilbur asks.

“Just sit in those chairs over there,” Tommy says and gestures to the chairs without looking or really thinking, preoccupied with turning his measuring tape around the right way.

“These one- fuck!” Tommy snaps his head around to see what happened only to double over in laughter. Wilbur had sat on the chair with one leg and fell right on his ass. Quackity wasn’t much different as Wilbur stood up, scowling as the two laughed at him.

“How the fuck did you not notice? That one’s broken, sit in the other one,” Tommy says through laughs, pointing at another chair. Wilbur looks at him skeptically, but slowly sits down in the other chair only to yelp as that one too crashes to the ground. Tommy and Quackity howl with laughter as Wilbur grumbles to himself and stands back up.

“Fuck you.” Tommy only laughs harder, both him and Quackity practically on the ground with tears in their eyes with how hard they’re laughing.

“Thank you Tommy, truly, for allowing me to have this beautiful memory and for saving me from the same fate,” Quackity says through his laughter, making Wilbur look at Tommy with betrayal.

“You stopped him from sitting on them, but not me?” Wilbur asks. “How could you Tommy?”

“The first one was an accident, but the second one was one hundred percent on purpose,” Tommy admits, laughter finally calming down, wiping tears from his eyes. “Gods, that was amazing.”

“How could you Tommy?” Wilbur repeats, dramatically falling against the wall. “I will never recover from this betrayal.”

“Yeah, yeah, drama queen. The last chair is fine, I replaced it last week. Well, a few days ago, but same thing.” Tommy waves his hand around flippantly and after another moment of suspicion on Wilbur’s part, he sits down. He holds his arms out for balance and waits for the chair to go crashing down but when nothing happens he sighs in relief and lets his arms fall.

“Phew,” Wilbur says. “All good!” He sends Tommy a thumbs up and he nods.

“Good, now back to you,” Tommy says, turning back to Quackity. “Arms out.” Tommy demonstrates and Quackity copies. “Okay, hold it just like that.” Tommy grabs his measuring

tape and takes measurements on his arms, legs, chest, and torso before grabbing his pins. He holds them in his teeth as he starts messing with one of the sleeves.

“Why do you have pins in your mouth? Isn’t that dangerous?” Wilbur asks as Tommy shifts around to the front of Quackity’s sleeve.

“They’re in my teeth,” Tommy mumbles and takes one out to pin the hem of the sleeve back. “It’s safe.”

“Okay,” Wilbur says, but continues to eye the pins anyway. Tommy ignores him and migrates to the other sleeve. It doesn’t take long to finish pinning his arms and legs and from there he moves on to pinning the jacket around his torso.

“I’m moving onto the wing holes now,” Tommy warns quietly. Back in the Smp Quackity was very against anyone going near his wings ever, for any reason, and he knows that it isn’t uncommon for people to lash out when people get too close to their hybrid features, let alone if someone were to step on their tail or bump into their wings or something. Quackity nods and Tommy moves around to reach his back.

Carefully Tommy pins back the fabric around Quackity’s wings and makes sure the holes are large enough to comfortably slip his wings in and out of, but not so much they’re too noticeable. “All done,” Tommy says and steps back. “Could you remove the jacket so I can pin the vest please?” Quackity nods and starts pulling it off. “Be careful, don’t mess up the pins or stab yourself with them.”

“Got it,” Quackity mumbles and is a little more careful pulling it off from then on. Tommy carefully takes the jacket from him and sets it over a mannequin. After that he starts pinning the vest and shirt. As he’s pinning the side there’s another crash and Wilbur falls to the ground.

“What the actual fuck?”

“Did I mention I found it in a dumpster?” Tommy says with a smile and finishes pinning the side. “I didn’t prick you, did I?” Tommy asks Quackity.

“Nope, all good.” Tommy nods and goes to finish the other sleeve but catches sight of Wilbur’s face.

“Stop pouting, it’s unbecoming,” Tommy says distractedly.

“What. The Fuck.” Wilbur says. Tommy snorts then and Quackity doesn’t bother holding in his laughter. “What the fuck!” Tommy starts laughing. He can’t help it!

“If you sat on the floor this never would have happened,” Tommy says.

“I’m not going to sit on the fucking floor!” Wilbur shouts, laughing in a more hysterical way than him and Quackity. Wilbur turns to the broken chairs. “What did I do to deserve this!” The chairs, obviously, don’t answer and Wilbur kicks them.

“You alright there big man? You’re sounding a little off there.” In all truthfulness, yes the laugh did remind him a little of Wilbur back in Pogtopia and yes maybe it was a *little* unsettling, but he’s sure Wilbur’s just joking around and he has no reason to be nervous. And if someone notices the slight tremor in his voice then they don’t bring it up.

“I’ve been betrayed,” Wilbur responds, voice pushed more towards obvious humor than before. Tommy takes a little breath, hidden as he finishes the pinning by Quackity’s wrist.

“There’s a chair in the back room by the dress I showed you. I sit in it every day and it hasn’t broken. You can bring it out here,” Tommy says. He had his fun, he should stop now before Wilbur starts to get actually angry.

“Thanks Tommy,” Wilbur says and disappears into the back room.

“Are you alright?” Tommy looks up at the whisper and finds Quackity looking surprisingly concerned. He’s probably just acting. Why would he be concerned about him? He’s just the guy he wants information on. “You got a little nervous for a second there.”

“I’m fine,” Tommy responds. Fuck he noticed. Of course he noticed, it’s his fucking job to notice things about people. “Nothing to worry about.”

“Did Wilbur-”

“It has nothing to do with Wilbur,” Tommy cuts off that line of thinking. “My past was shit and it has nothing to do with anyone here.” He probably should have made up some lie about stabbing himself with the needle or something, but he reacted before he could really think.

There’s a moment of silence where Tommy fears he won’t accept the answer, knowing it’d be too late to blame a pin, but thankfully Quackity nods. “Okay.”

There’s a bunch of loud thumping noises as Wilbur struggles to get the chair through the door. “Hey! Be careful with that! It’s my favorite chair!” Tommy rushes over and grabs it from him. “Give me that!” Tommy easily carries it into the room and sets it a little away from the platform Quackity’s standing on. “There, now sit down and stop causing distractions.”

“What the fuck...” Wilbur whispers looking back and forth between where he’s standing and where Tommy is now, hand pointing back and forth between both places. “How did you move that so easily?”

“Practice, now sit down or get out. You’re annoying my client.” Wilbur scrambles to the chair as Tommy walks over to Quackity.

“It’s quite funny actually.”

“He’s annoying my client,” Tommy repeats pointedly, staring Quackity down until he nods. “Right, now let’s finish this up shall we? We still have to talk design after all.”

“I want you to decide.”

“Full creative liberty?” Tommy clarifies, eyes shining with glee.

“Full creative liberty.”

“Oh fuck yeah.” Quackity and Wilbur chuckles as Tommy grabs a few more pins. “I just have to finish up the back and we’re all good to go.” Quackity nods and Tommy pins up the back around his wings. “And...done! You’re all set big man. Just change and you’re all good. Be careful with the pins though.”

“Got it.” Quackity leaves the main room to change and Tommy starts cleaning up the space while he waits. Quackity doesn’t take long, carefully handing Tommy the clothes without disrupting the pins as he returns it. Tommy thanks him and places the clothes on a mannequin for safekeeping. He did pretty good, from what he can tell his base was pretty close. This Quackity’s just a little shorter than his old friend and has bigger wings, but other than that he got the sizing pretty much dead on.

“Is there anything else you’ll be needing today?” Tommy asks.

“Nope,” Quackity responds and Tommy nods.

“Then thank you for visiting Clem’s Couturier. You will be notified when your order is finished but in the meantime please feel free to call or stop by for any reason.”

“Sure thing, see you later Toms!”

“See ya Q.” Quackity leaves the ship with a ding from the bell over the door and Tommy turns to Wilbur. Wilbur stands up straight like he was caught doing something he wasn’t supposed to be doing and smiles.

“Tommy!” He says, drawing out his name.

“The fuck did you do?”

“What? I didn’t do anything,” Wilbur defends while still drawing out his words in a very obviously guilty fashion.

“Did you break my favorite chair cause if you did I will murder you.” The first three he could understand, they were practically in the garbage as it was, but his *favorite* chair? No, he wouldn’t stand for it. He didn’t fill the thing with concrete to make sure it wouldn’t be stolen just to have it broken by a bitch.

“I didn’t break your chair!”

“You broke the other three.”

“They were already broken! Look, your chair is fine!” Wilbur gestures over exaggerating towards the chair with both hands and Tommy nods to himself.

“Good, blood’s a bitch to clean. Especially with all this fabric.”

Wilbur seems to choke on air and with a disbelieving chuckle he says, “I’m *sorry*-”

“You’re excused. Anyway!” Tommy ignores Wilbur as he grabs his chair and carries it back to its rightful place, shoulder pushing the door open for his full hands. “I am still at work so it’ll probably be pretty boring to stick around from here on out.”

“I doubt that,” Wilbur says. “Do you think I could buy this?” Wilbur holds up a scarf that he made out of boredom a couple weeks before.

“Sure,” Tommy shrugs. “It is a shop.” He sets down the chair and heads back to the register to ring him up.

“Thanks.” Wilbur patiently waits to be told the price as Tommy takes a second to remember how the machine works. “While I’d love to stick around and chat, I should probably be getting home soon,” Wilbur says as he hands over the money and Tommy gives him back the scarf. Wilbur starts looping it around his neck. “My poor old man is so, so old and his bones are so, so brittle...” Wilbur hangs his head in mock sadness, hand over his heart as he speaks of a man he knows to be very, very old.

“Alright bitch,” Tommy says. “Just make sure the dumbass doesn’t die before putting you in the will, yeah? And share the money when you get it. All it takes is a well placed pillow you know.” Wilbur bursts out laughing as Tommy can’t help but join in, breaking the mock seriousness he was speaking with.

“Goodbye Tommy,” Wilbur says through his laughter and waves as he walks out of the shop and down the street, out of view.

Tommy’s laughter slowly peters out as he scurries around cleaning his mess from the day, broken chair pieces thrown in the dumpster behind the building, and sits down to finish up the dress he was working on. Clementine comes back at some point, but she was basically asleep on her feet and Tommy shooed her up to her apartment before she could try and do more work like she’d done to him many times before. The dress is practically done by the time nightfall arrives, a little after his shift, but not too late. He cleans up the shop a bit before leaving, locking up behind him.

It’s during his walk that he’s hit with a reminder. “I didn’t call Wilbur by his full name!” Tommy groans with annoyance. “Now I’m going to have to wait until Sunday,” he bemoans. He would do it tomorrow but he’s meeting Fundy at lunch and won’t have time to see Niki or Wilbur. “Whatever,” he sighs and keeps walking, now slouched with his hands in his pockets. He’s waited longer to talk to Wilbur before he can wait a day.

Tommy’s about halfway through the walk when a chill runs up his spine and a sense of foreboding covers his brain.

Well shit.



No chairs were harmed in the making of this chapter.

I spent way too long looking up minecraft potion recipes lol

I'm so sorry for the long wait everyone. Between finals and the end of the school year and all that I just didn't have any time to write or edit anything. I am going on vacation next week and won't have time to work on this then either so the next chapter will be a little delayed, but after that I should be getting back to a chapter every other week.

# Chapter Eighteen

## Chapter Summary

Wilbur's point of view at Clem's and patrol.

## Chapter Notes

Tw's:  
death, minor gore

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy tends to exaggerate, that's something Wilbur is accustomed to, so when he said he was 'amazing at magic' of course he was doubtful. He usually gives the kid the benefit of the doubt, but this time he just didn't see magic as something Tommy could do. He did not expect to have to eat his words, Tommy was surprisingly good at it. He seriously had no idea how he did it. His power maybe?

"You have that fitting today, right?" Wilbur asks. It's a good thing Niki texts him if Tommy shows up early. He really enjoys hanging out with Tommy and he'd hate if they didn't get to hang out because he slept a few extra minutes.

"Yup, after lunch," Tommy answers and sets the money for his meal on the table despite knowing Niki always offers the food for free. She gives free stuff to all her friends, but Wilbur knows it's also partly because of her powers. They're shitty to deal with sometimes.

"Can I come?" Tommy proceeds to look at him like he just asked for salt in his tea instead of sugar.

"Why would you want to do that?"

"I meant what I said yesterday. I want to see what you can do." Tommy stares at him, anger flicking through his gaze quick enough he almost didn't notice it. He stares for long enough that Wilbur starts to get nervous. Was he overstepping by asking? No, right? Yeah, it's probably fine. If he says no then he says no. No big deal. Not at all. But why was he angry? Maybe he was angry with him for asking? No, he'll tell him if he's angry. Just stay calm and wait for his answer. Worst case scenario, he tells him to fuck off out of his life and he doesn't want to be friends with him anymore. Oh fuck-

“Fine. But stay out of the way, okay? I won’t have you upsetting my customers.” Tommy jabs his finger at him and Wilbur puts his arms up and nods frantically, relief that their friendship wasn’t over washing over him. “Good.” Tommy collects his food and walks over to his usual seat, Wilbur staying behind to get himself a coffee.

“The usual?” Niki asks.

“Stronger please.”

“Two shots?”

“Three please.”

“I’m not giving you three shots of espresso.”

“Niki,” he whines.

“No,” she responds. “Phil said you’re not allowed more than two after you stayed up for a week straight on caffeine and spite. I won’t give you more than two.”

“Fine, two then,” Wilbur huffs, admitting defeat with a roll of his eyes. He’ll just get another coffee later. Good luck policing his caffeine intake then, ha!

Wilbur watches as she makes his coffee, narrowing his eyes at her when she puts a little less than two full shots of espresso but she acts like she doesn’t see him and continues as normal. Curse Niki and her care for his health and wellbeing. And curse his Dad for making sure no one let him drink over the advised daily caffeine amount. So what if he regularly drinks twice the advised daily amount of caffeine? He works the night shit! It’s justified and he deserves it thank you very much.

As Niki is walking over with his coffee, oh how he loves coffee, he suddenly remembers what he was so excited to tell her about when he was walking over earlier that day. He beams, bouncing on his toes as he tries not to just blurt it out in his haste to share.

“What’s got you all excited all of a sudden?” Niki asks, confused by the quick flip. “I know you love coffee, but I know it’s not this much.”

“Last night, I went to visit Tommy, right?”

“Right,” she repeats slowly.

“Yeah and I was tired so I was falling asleep and Tommy woke me up.”

“And what’s so exciting about that?”

“He *hates* being touched and Niki, he tapped me on the shoulder to wake me up. He trusts me, Niki! Well, he trusts *Siren* enough to tap his shoulder, but that’s something, right?”

“Good for you,” Niki says with a smile. “I’m glad Tommy’s starting to get more comfortable around you.” Wilbur nods a few times in quick succession.

“Me too. Oh, and I think maybe it has something to do with his power,” Wilbur adds. “He pulled away really quickly.” He doesn’t need to say it, she knows she does the same thing. Either he has a power with negative side effects like Niki or it’s entirely unrelated.

“We’ll just have to wait and see,” Niki says and Wilbur nods, taking his coffee and placing money on the table getting a playful glare from the pink haired woman.

“Thanks for the coffee.”

“Oh, get going already you asshole.”

“Niki, you wound me.”

“Oh, shoo.” Wilbur laughs as Niki shoos him away, jogging the first few steps before slowing down as he nears the table.

“Wilbur.”

“Tommy.” Wilbur, stupidly, decided to put his coffee on the table as he sat down with the intent to let it cool a bit before drinking since it was too hot, but instead a scarred hand reaches out and snatches it away. “Hey! Give that back!” he lunges, desperately trying to grab his precious coffee, but it was too late. Tommy holds it in his grubby little hands, out of Wilbur’s reach.

“No, it’s mine!”

“No it isn’t!” Wilbur makes another grab for the cup, but it, once again, evades his grasp.

“Catch!” Tommy yells and throws it away from the table. What is he doing? He’s wasting precious coffee! Fearfully, Wilbur follows the trajectory, hoping to every god above it doesn’t hit someone as it crashes down, only to find it missing. He looks around, thinking he missed something, before whipping his head back around to Tommy.

“Where the fuck did it go?”

“I don’t know,” Tommy shrugs, acting like he didn’t just steal *his* coffee. His *coffee*. He needs his coffee. It was hard enough getting just this from Niki, he doubts she’ll be so willing to hand over another cup.

“I didn’t even get to have any,” he whines. “I’ll be right back.” His poor, poor coffee. Probably hidden away under a seat or something by that devil child. How could he? How could someone do something so cruel? He ignores Tommy’s laughter as he walks back up to Niki who narrows her eyes.

“A coffee please.”

“I’m not giving you another coffee.”

“Please Niki,” he begs. “I need my coffee.”

“I just gave you one,” she sighs. “Surely that must be enough.”

“That gremlin stole it,” he says accusingly and points at an impishly grinning Tommy.

Niki snorts, “Guess that explains how you drank it so quickly.”

Wilbur stares at her in betrayal. “Niki, how could you? This is a crime of the highest sort!”

“I doubt it.” Before Wilbur could do more than make another affronted noise she walks towards the machine to make him another coffee. He thanks her profusely for the coffee and turns around with his cup in hand, ready to head back to the table. “I’ve got anothe- what the fuck?”

Tommy grins even wider, mischief in his eyes, as he walks backward, sipping from *his* coffee. “Hurry up slowpoke. You’re going to make me late!”

“How the fuck did you do that?” Wilbur asks once he catches up, breathing heavily from the impromptu sprint. “Also, how could you leave me like that? I’m offended.” Wilbur holds his hand to his head and pretends to die, doing his best not to break character and smile as he takes a sip of his coffee while ‘dead’.

“You’re a shit dead person you know,” Tommy says, snorting a laugh. “Dead people can’t drink coffee.”

“I’m alive!” Wilbur yells, returning from his temporary death. “I can’t live without coffee.” He would probably drop dead within a day if it was taken away from him. Less maybe. Maybe Niki’s got a point with the whole ‘you drink too much coffee’ thing. Nah, you can never have too much coffee.

“Like I said shit dead person. If you’re dead you can’t drink coffee, but at that point it doesn’t really matter, does it?” Tommy asks.

“It is what keeps me alive,” Wilbur says, leaning in close, revealing his secret to surviving the day without passing out.

“So all I have to do is take that away to kill you? Sweet.” Wilbur glares at Tommy as he smirks and drinks more of what was supposed to be *his* coffee.

“How *did* you do that? Is it something to do with your power?” Wilbur asks. He can’t figure out how he did those tricks. Surely it has to have *something* to do with his power, right?

“Huh? What do you mean?”

“The magic stuff. Do you have an illusion power or something? I was thinking something with emotions cause of your eyes, but illusions would make sense too.”

“I don’t have one.”

At that moment it was like a bucket of cold water was dumped on his head and he almost spit out the coffee in his mouth out of shock, hitting his chest a few times as he chokes and

coughs. Why did he have to ask? It's rude to ask! Why the fuck did he ask? "I'm sorry?"

"I don't have a power," Tommy repeats with a shrug. Fuck, no! He didn't mean to make him repeat it! He was just shocked!

"Well shit...I'm sorry." What was that? What kind of apology is that! It takes all his self control not to freak out and start begging for forgiveness and depending on Tommy's response to his idiotic apology he might just end up doing it anyway.

"Eh, I don't care," Tommy responds flippantly, waving him off like he didn't just ask something extremely insensitive. How can he be so calm about this? Asking about someone's power without them bringing it up first is rude and not only did Wilbur do exactly that, but Tommy *doesn't have one*. Most would have ended their friendship right then and there! Okay, maybe he's exaggerating a little, but he still shouldn't have asked.

"No, it's rude to ask people about their powers and I did it anyway. I'm sorry, truly. I guess I just got a little too curious," Wilbur says sheepishly. Please don't hate him...

"Seriously, I don't give a fuck. Can't blame you for being curious." Wilbur sighs in relief. Thank you Tommy for not hating him.

Wilbur clears his throat before changing gears, hopefully Tommy won't hold this against him in the future. "Wow, you really walk all this way every day?" he asks with an awkward laugh. "I don't think I'd be able to do it."

"Oh please," Tommy responds. "This's got *nothing* on my walk home." Wilbur relaxes more as the topic changes and he can put his blunder out of mind, for now at least.

"Is it really that far?"

"I live in Lower L'Manburg," Tommy deadpans. "What do you think?"

"Oh yeah," Wilbur realizes. "Guess that is a whole district away."

"Mhm," Tommy nods and suddenly starts jogging. Wilbur, startled, quickly tries to follow and Tommy shoves open the door to a shop that looks like the oldest on the block, but still well kept. "We have arrived! Oh, Clementine! I brought a friend!" Tommy sing-songs.

Wilbur follows Tommy into the place and he has to say, he really likes the interior. It's nice, cozy. Much different from the usual places he goes to for formal clothes. The contrast between the dark wood and red accents mixed with worn chairs and counters make the place seem homey and comfortable. He also likes the more casual clothing off to the side. The places he usually goes to for tailoring only have formal clothes.

"Oh, hello," a woman, who he assumes is Clementine, says as she enters the room. "And who might you be?"

Wilbur opens his mouth to answer but before he can Tommy cuts him off by saying, "That's Wilbitch." Wilbur glares at him, even though Tommy was still facing Clementine and

couldn't see, and Tommy doesn't even bother trying to hide his smile. Wilbur turns to the woman with a smile.

"It's Wilbur, actually."

"Ah, Wilbur. I've heard a lot about you." Clementine grabs one of his hands and lightly shakes it with both of hers.

"Have you now?" Wilbur smirks. He is so teasing him about this later. He knew Tommy cared about him. "All good things I assume?"

"Sometimes, he likes to complain," she responds lightheartedly. Wilbur's face drops into offense and she joins Tommy in his laughter though she was a lot nicer about it. "Don't worry dear. He cares about you a great deal."

"I do not," Tommy protests.

"Oh, yes you do. Don't try to deny it," she says, wagging her finger at Tommy. "The way you talk about him makes me think you two were brothers." It's quick, but for a split second he could have sworn he saw Tommy's smile drop. He shouldn't feel upset about it, he probably saw it wrong anyway, Tommy's got a brother already. He doesn't need another one.

"Don't say that, I will cry," Wilbur responds and pretends to wipe a tear from his eye. When in doubt, pretend it never happened. He's sure he imagined it anyway. Yeah, that's it.

Tommy clears his throat, a smile that seems faker than usual plastered on his face, and speaks. "Wilbur wanted to see some of the stuff I've made." And that's what he's going to do! He's over here moping for no reason when he should be looking around the shop and checking out the stuff Tommy's made.

"Get it together Wilbur," he whispers to himself barely loud enough for himself to hear as he wanders a bit away. With new determination he focuses on looking around rather than thinking about Tommy's reaction to being referred to as his brother. He really shouldn't be so affected by it, it's not like they've known each other for very long anyway.

Wilbur tunes out their conversation as he starts examining the products lined neatly on the shelves. He wonders if Tommy made any of them? He can't imagine Tommy sitting down spending hours painstakingly sewing every stitch of embroidery, but at the same time he can. It doesn't seem like something Tommy would enjoy, but at the same time it sounds exactly like something he would like doing. Sometimes it feels like Tommy's a walking contradiction.

Clementine grabs her bag, holding it between her two hands, and leaves the building signaling it was time to start paying attention again.

"She seems nice," Wilbur says.

"She is," Tommy agrees with a nod. "Hurry up, we don't have long before the appointment." Tommy walks quickly to the back door, but Wilbur hesitates right before the doorway. Only

employees are allowed in backrooms, right? Yeah, there's even a sign! He can't go back there! "Come on. I'm the only employee. No one's going to yell at you for being in the back room." Curse him for knowing exactly what he was worried about. Tommy waves him forwards and Wilbur follows Tommy into the room rolling his eyes.

Tommy stops at a cloth mannequin thing with a dress on it and there wasn't a word to describe it other than beautiful.

"Somebody commissioned it for something called a 'renaissance faire' the other day. I've looked into them. They seem pretty cool."

"It's amazing," Wilbur whispers, getting closer to the dress. The top was a corset with flowing sleeves and a nearly floor length skirt which that alone must have taken a lot of work, but on top of that the corset had intricate beading and both that and the skirt were lined with elaborate embroidery that he's sure took hours upon hours of constant work. "You really made this? All by yourself?"

"Mostly," Tommy shrugs. *Shrugs!* Like this isn't something incredible! He wouldn't even know where to begin! "Clem did help me a bit with the corset since I'd never made one before, but I think it turned out pretty well."

"This must have taken ages," Wilbur says, stepping even closer to look at the embroidery. Flowers and leaves in a twisting pattern like they were being blown in the wind down the front meeting at the bottom of the corset before picking back up and continuing around the bottom of the skirt.

"Tell me about it," Tommy scoffs, smiling in a proud way. "My hand hasn't cramped that bad since I first started sewing."

Cramped? Isn't the whole point of a sewing machine that you don't get hand cramps from all the sewing? And that it's faster of course, but surely the embroidery didn't make his hand cramp that bad, right? Wait a second, that means. "You sewed it all *by hand*?"

"Yeah, how else would I do it?"

"Use a sewing machine," Wilbur answers slowly. He really does all this by hand? No wonder his hand got cramped!

"Those fucking devil machines? Fuck no."

"Why not? It would make everything a lot faster."

"Do you know how fucking loud those things are? How am I supposed to enjoy myself with all that racket! And those needles? They're moving so fast it'll sew up my arm instead of the fabric! I'm not going anywhere near those things," Tommy huffs, arms crossed.

"That only makes this, like, ten times cooler," Wilbur responds and takes a step back. "Next time I have to dress up for a work event I'm definitely coming here." The next time he has to go to one of Schlatt's parties he's getting Tommy to make his suit. Every time his suit's pants



are too short or the jacket's too loose or the color just doesn't work. He once had to wear a purple suit to a monochrome themed party after a fabric mishap, he picked it up on the way to the party and there wasn't enough time to change it. He's convinced Techno told them to do it because he scared him a few days before. It's not his fault Techno didn't see him sitting in a chair in the dark, definitely not on purpose. He should get his eyes checked.

"I'll hold you to that, big man," Tommy says, sending finger guns his way. "Now, I need to get ready for my customer." Wilbur gestures for him to do whatever he needs to do and takes to wandering around. Tommy runs around grabbing seemingly random things, but he must know what he's doing because he doesn't look the least bit nervous when the bell rings and the customer walks in.

"Tommy!" he hears Quackity exclaim from the front room and goes to greet him when something falls off the shelves in front of him. He quickly places it back, a spool of thread, but it falling had seemed to set off a chain reaction. Spool after spool falls and he struggles to catch each and every one before they hit the floor. The mini avalanche continues falling as he catches and places spool after spool, panicking as he catches one right before it hits the ground, and finally slows to a stop. He shoves them all back wherever they could fit on the shelves like they were there the whole time and clears his throat as he walks towards the front door pretending nothing ever happened.

"Hey Q," he greets coolly. That was nearly a disaster, imagine what would have happened if he let the thread fall. Neither of them would ever let him live it down.

"Wilbur! What are the odds man? You here for a fitting too?"

"Nah, I just decided to tag along after lunch," Wilbur responds. "I never got to see Tommy's work so I decided, why not?"

"It's pretty cool," Quackity says. "I saw some of the stuff he was working on before and man was it cool."

"I know right? Tommy showed me a dress he's working on earlier and it was beautiful. I wouldn't even know where to begin making something like that."

"Everything's set, are you ready to go?" Tommy interrupts, moving everyone along.

"Yup! Where do you want me?"

"I've got a base..."

Wilbur tunes out their conversation and decides to wander a bit more. He can't tell what Tommy's made from sight alone, but there's a few embroidered pieces that he's sure Tommy did. All of them seem to be nature themed and he sees a dark blue scarf with waves and fish embroidered along the edges in a whimsical pattern, the thread a lighter blue that stuck out from the dark background, and decides then and there that he will be buying it before he leaves.

He spends most of the visit looking around and watching Tommy work and it was an overall good time, minus the repeated breaking of chairs. He paid for the scarf before he left and walked out of the shop with it wrapped around his neck. He's warmer already. He just has to make sure it's hidden if he ever wears it on patrol. That would be a real shitty way for Tommy to find out he's a hero, let alone one he knows and seems to at least somewhat trust. He knows Tommy doesn't exactly have the highest opinion of heroes and he'd hate for that to be what ruins their friendship.

One thing that worried him was Tommy's reaction to him kicking the chair. He hid it well, too well, but Wilbur was still able to see how nervous he looked afterwards. He may act oblivious sometimes, but he's still a hero. It's his job to pick up on things like that. He made a mental note to be more careful in similar situations in the future. Another thing he made note of was not to underestimate Tommy so much anymore. He somehow carried that chair into the room like it was nothing. It was clunky and awkward and Wilbur knew he'd have trouble with it purely because of the lack of decent handholds, not to mention he may slack just a bit when it comes to strength training, but Tommy just carried it through a doorway like it was something he did everyday. He is now slightly more weary at the thought of getting into a fight with him. Don't get him wrong, he would one hundred percent win, but he's pretty sure someone who can lift something that heavy so easily can pack a decent punch.

He tried lifting the chair again later on when no one was looking and all he got out of it was a smashed toe and poorly hidden embarrassment. It was like the thing was weighed down with concrete or something.

His phone rings and Wilbur picks it up, answers, and holds it to his ear in one fluid motion. "Yeah?"

*"Are you going on patrol tonight?"* Phil asks.

"Yup."

*"Are you sure?"* Phil asks. *"I heard you up all night last night-"*

"I'm fine Phil," Wilbur cuts him off. "It's just a patrol. Besides, a fight'll help me get out all this pent up energy. It feels like ages since I've gone on patrol."

*"It's been three days, Will,"* Phil laughs.

"Exactly! For-ev-er." Wilbur smiles and adjusts his scarf absentmindedly as he walks to the Hero Tower. He still has some time before his shift but he wouldn't mind talking to some of the others for a while. Maybe he'll stop by the lab for a bit, it's been a while since he's talked to Sam after all.

*"Just make sure you don't push yourself,"* Phil says.

"I know, I know," Wilbur chuckles. "Oh! Phil, I've been challenged!"

*"I'm sorry what?"* Phil asks, laughing at the sudden change in conversation.

“I was at Tommy’s work, right, and Quackity walked in,” Wilbur starts explaining. “Wasn’t expecting to see him there, but apparently he was the one getting the suit fitting.”

*“Okay,” Phil chuckles.*

“Be quiet Phill, I’m talking,” Wilbur says and Phil bursts out laughing before it becomes muffled like he’s holding the phone away from his face.

*“Continue,”* he continues to laugh.

“Thank you, anyway, when he was leaving he called Tommy ‘Toms’! Then he *winked!* Winked Phil! That’s my nickname for him and he knows it, hey no, stop laughing!”

*“I’m sorry,”* Phil cackles. *“Sorry, sorry, continue.”*

“No, I don’t think you’re taking me seriously Phil,” Wilbur denies, shaking his head as he fights back a smile, this is a very serious conversation. “You know, I think Tommy’s right, I should hurry things along so I can collect on my inheritance.”

*“Excuse me?”* Phil laughs.

“Yes, I will kill you in your sleep then share the money with Tommy,” Wilbur nods.

*“Okay Will,”* Phil chuckles. *“You do that. Just make sure you’re not out too late, alright? If you’re going to insist on getting up early to see Tommy then you’re getting at least five hours of sleep, got it?”*

“Got it dad,” Wilbur responds, feigning annoyance. “Five hours gives me plenty of time to kill you and get away with it.”

*“You little shit,”* Phil laughs and Wilbur can’t help but join in.

“I’ll see you later,” Wilbur finally says as his laughter calms down.

*“Bye Will, stay safe!”*

Wilbur hangs up the call and pulls his sleeves over his hands, shrinking into the collar of his sweater. It’s starting to get windy. He *hates* the cold seasons. Especially when he has to do stake outs or patrols in the snow. He shivers just thinking about it and flips up the collar of his undershirt. He doesn’t do well in the snow, it fucking sucks. At least he’s got a little bit before he has to worry about that.

He arrives at the Hero Tower thoroughly chilled, despite the relatively decent temperatures, and rubs his hands together to warm up as he enters the lobby. Curse his susceptibility to the cold. He trudges through the building and down to the lab, hands tucked under his crossed arms to warm up.

“Hey Sam.” Wilbur breathes out a sigh of relief as he steps into the workshop, it’s always warmer in the lab than the rest of the building.

“Hey Wilbur,” Sam says, looking up from whatever project he’s working on as Sam Nook’s carry on in the background. “What brings you all the way down here?”

“It’s been a while,” Wilbur shrugs and sits in a nearby chair. “Thought I’d come say hi.”

“Well, hello then,” Sam chuckles. “Want to test out your new gear while you’re here?”

“Sure!” Wilbur bounces out of his seat and waits excitedly for Sam to bring over his new gear. Sam returns a few minutes later with something that looks like a very clunky gun with a metal claw on the end. “A grappling hook!”

“Mhm,” Sam nods and pulls it away from Wilbur’s reaching hands. “I’m not letting you hold it without showing you how to use it first.”

“Then show me how,” Wilbur says, bouncing on the balls of his feet with barely contained excitement. Sam sighs and leads Wilbur over to a test room off to the side of the lab.

“You load it like this,” Sam says and slowly shows each step for loading the weapon. “Then you turn off the safety here,” he flips a switch. “Then you aim and fire.” He aims for a target on the other side of the room and presses the trigger, launching it towards the red circle. It hits the center of the target and falls to the ground. “Press this button to release more line and this one to call it back.” The line goes slack then comes zipping back and the hook settles back into the barrel of the gun.

“My turn!” Sam sighs before handing it over. “Okay, point, aim, and shoot.” He stands with his feet wide, knees slightly bent, and carefully aims it like a gun, something he has plenty of practice with. The hook bounces harmlessly off the target, hitting just below the bullseye since the projectile is heavier than he’s used to, and falls to the ground.

“Good,” Sam says. “You’ll have to aim a little higher than you want it to go so it’ll catch, but you’ll get the hang of it. Oh, and keep in mind how long the line is before you shoot it.”

“Got it, I’ll make sure to practice a bit tonight,” Wilbur agrees, nodding as he calls back the hook. It snaps back into place with a click and Wilbur flips the safety back on.

“I added a holster to your belt,” Sam says and grabs his utility belt from a nearby table. “If you’d rather the holster on your leg it wouldn’t be too hard to change it.”

“I’m sure this’ll be fine,” Wilbur waves off. “If I change my mind later I’ll let you know.” Sam nods.

“Good. Now get out of my workshop. “I’ve got somewhere to be and I don’t trust you in my lab alone.”

Wilbur gasps, “*Sam*. How could you not trust me?”

“I trust you, just not in my workshop.”

Wilbur sighs and shakes his head back and forth. “You set a few fires and suddenly you’re ‘not trustworthy’. I see how it is.”

“The fires weren't a big deal,” Sam denies. “Sapnap sets enough of those that we’re used to them. It’s the *explosions* that I’m more worried about.”

“Well-”

“And the misplaced weapons?”

“I set them down and they disappeared!”

“What about the stun gun I made that just so happened to be in pieces after you left?”

“Okay, that one was an accident-”

“And the others weren’t?”

“You know what? I think I’m going to go. Bye Sam!”

“Bye Wilbur!” Sam calls after Wilbur as he speed walks away. It really isn’t his fault. He sees something cool, he has to play with it. It’s not *his* fault they broke! Or exploded. Or went missing...okay yeah he’s starting to see the problem here. Oh well, time for patrol.

When he got to his floor he realized he got ahead of himself and still had a few hours to kill before his patrol so he ended up lazing around for most of it. He would have used that time to train, but does he really need to? He’s going out later anyway and it’s not like he lost his ability to fight in the couple days he was off duty. When it’s finally almost time for his patrol he speeds through changing and is ready to go in record timing, aka his usual time because heroes are trained to change fast in case of emergencies.

He leaves the tower just as his shift starts and heads off into Upper L’Manburg. He hops from roof to roof for a bit before finding somewhere he deems safe enough to test his newest toy-ehem professional hero equipment.

He grabs his brand new grappling hook and lines up the shot with a low building in front of him. On the off chance he misses the fall wouldn’t be debilitating and he should be able keep going with his night. He shoots and he swings and he sticks the landing! It was fun too.

His grin stretches across his face as he lines up the hook with the next roof and shoots. He grins as he swings through the air and lands with a huff of air, feet bracing him against the side of the building. He lets out the reel until his feet hit the asphalt of the road and he presses the button to retract the line. It snaps back into place and he turns on the safety before flipping it once and shoving it back into its holster, the clip over top the gun holding it in place. He had no real reason to flip it other than it made him feel like a cool super spy from a movie. While, yes, he may be a superhero, he can’t help but think the guys in the movies are cool.

He starts walking down the street when something catches his eyes, something reflecting in the low light of the street lamps. He backpedals before jogging into the alley. He kneels down to the shiny spot on the ground and grabs his flashlight from his belt and points it at the spot.

“Blood,” he whispers and stands up, shining the light around the alley. There was an alarming amount of blood pooled in the alley, enough that he would expect to have to call in a murder. “But no body...” How can there be this much blood, but no body? The body could have been moved, but he didn’t see a trail or any drag marks. “I better call this in.” He grabs his phone and dials the police’s non-emergency line.

*“Siren?”*

“Yes, I found a pool of blood in an alley near the northern border in Lower L’Manburg. There’s no trail or body nearby.”

*“We’ll send a dispatch to your location. Look around and call back if you find more information.”*

“Of course,” Siren responds and hangs up the call. He quickly marks down his location so the police will be able to find the blood and climbs back up to the roof. He shines the light down the alleys he passes as he travels, slowly moving along the border between L’Manburg’s and doesn’t see anything suspicious until he moves further into Upper L’Manburg.

He jumps down and takes his phone back out. “I found another pool of blood. It was pretty far from the first one, but still no trail and no body.”

*“We will send officers to the new location.”*

Siren marks the new location and pockets his phone. Two pools of blood with no victims. There’s something off here. Usually if there isn’t a body there’s a trail, either from the victim getting away or from the body being moved. Neither site had any evidence of either thing happening, it’s like the bodies just disappeared.

On a hunch Siren starts looking around again, but this time in line with the first two sites and like he expected, there was another pool of blood only this time there was a body, a decapitated body to be more exact. Not only that but the murder reminded him not only of the warehouse murders, but of the murder in the alley a few weeks before. Are they connected? If they are then all three are more than one off scenarios. It would make sense. The alley murder was confirmed to have been done using a large blade which would match up with the warehouse murders and if this wasn’t done with an axe he would eat his coat.

One last time, hopefully, Siren pulled out his phone and connected with the police.

“I found another pool of blood. This one has a body. I think we have a serial killer.”

## Chapter End Notes

Hey everyone! I'm finally back which means we can finally get back to more regular updates, I'm aiming for about every other week.

Also apparently this is over 100k words now and wow I've never actually written something this long before and there's still so much I have planned.

That's all I've got for now so see you next time :)

# Chapter Nineteen

## Chapter Summary

Tommy meets another assassin.

## Chapter Notes

TW's:

Violence, blood, death, gore, minor torture?

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy's pace slows and his eyes dart around the street as he keeps an eye out for the day's attackers. He knows they're there and he knows they're not just watching anymore. He scans rooftops and alleyways and around each and every corner. So far, nothing. Then as he's passing by an alley he could have sworn he checked an arm wraps around his chest and a hand covers his mouth, silencing any noise he may have thought to make as he's dragged backwards into the alley. What he could see of the arm was flickering, switching between blending in with his shirt and looking like a normal arm.

Camouflage.

He doesn't waste any time stomping on the attackers foot, aiming for the delicate bones by the pinkie toes, and bites the hand held over his mouth. He may not be used to fighting against powers, but he was and always will be a soldier and soldiers can adapt and fight and he will not lose.

The man holding him curses at the pain and his grip loosens enough for Tommy to break out of the hold. Tommy jumps back, hand hovering over his hot bar, a second away from summoning his sword, when a loud bang cuts off any thoughts in that regard. Pain blooms through his chest and he's sent to the ground. He glares at the people who attacked him and he uses every moment he has left to commit their name tags to his memory, swearing he'll kill them for what they've done. The last thing he sees is the man lowering his gun until it's level with his head then he shoots.

\*\*\*\*\*

Tommy opens his eyes to find himself slumped over in his favorite chair in the back room of Clem's. He'd taken to setting his spawn whenever he's in a new location as a precaution and most recently that was his chair at work. He blinks to get used to the feeling of being alive



again, slowly moving his joints as he shoves away the usual confusion and the uncoordinated feeling in his limbs that comes with it, then he scowls as everything that happened comes rushing back. He rips down his sleeves to check his lives and sure enough the heart nearest his wrist is pulsing with new life and there's a second little black tally sitting innocently next to the first on his arm.

"Those pieces of shit," he growls, grip on his sleeve tightening as his vision goes red, any sense of rationality fleeing in the face of his rage. "I'll tear them to fucking pieces." He jerks his sleeves back the right way and thunders out of the shop, flinging the door open so hard it smacks against the brick storefront, no doubt putting a dent in the rusty red stone.

The anger buzzed in his mind making everything feel far away as his vision narrowed to a single red tinted point, kill the bastards who dared try and take away his second chance.

So narrow in fact that he forgot just because someone temporarily succeeded doesn't mean there aren't others with the same goal. There was nothing that could reach him through his anger as he thundered his way to where he'd been killed. He didn't notice as the empty streets became eerily silent. He didn't notice the eyes returning, tailing him as he continued his beeline for where he was killed. He didn't notice that as he finally caught sight of the name tags of the bastards who killed him walking a few streets over there was another crouching in a nearby alley.

A glint of light against metal shining in Tommy's eye finally brought his awareness to the area around him and he turned towards the source, prepared to curse out whatever decided to piss him off in his already pissed off state and was met with the barrel of a gun pointed between his eyes. The man's finger presses against the trigger right as Tommy pushes away his anger enough to fully realize the situation, but he's too late. The gun went off with a bang and Tommy's head felt like it was splitting open, something so similar and yet so different from an arrow, and everything went black.

\*\*\*\*\*

"What. the. Fuck!" Again? Again! "What the fuck!" he screams. The need to tear and burn and destroy and *kill* everything that gets in his way only grows stronger as he almost knocks over his seat from how fast he got up. He thunders out of the shop for the second time that night with newfound clarity, so angry that instead of red blurred vision he sees *everything*.

His eyes darted to the cat jumping off a trashcan and into an alley. He watches an empty can roll down the street. He listens into every sound he's come to know in his time in the city. He pays attention to every little disturbance around him as his chest burns with red hot anger and his hands itch towards his sword. He pays attention as silence seems to descend upon the world for the third time that night. He pays attention as a man lines up his gun with his head and prepares to pull the trigger, smiling as he's sure his kill is in the bag, and Tommy is *pissed*.

Tommy drops right as the man pulls the trigger with a cocky smile, the bullet whizzing far over his head, and Tommy snaps his head up to glare at the shocked man. Tommy rockets forward, sword already in hand, not willing to take any more chances and too pissed to care if the man hasn't actually killed him. It doesn't matter, he shot first. It's still self defense.

He drops again as he reaches the man and slides through his legs, sword trailing behind him and lashing out to slice the man's achilles tendon, sending him right to the ground. The man yells out and falls to one knee as Tommy bounces back to his feet, hand brushing a crate as he raises to set his spawn, double checking it set as the confirmation appears in the corner of his eye. He grins, feral and wrath, as he turns back to his opponent only to be met with a gun to the face, the man having recovered enough to lift his gun and aim.

He fired.

\*\*\*\*\*

When Tommy opens his eyes this time he's on the crate he set his spawn on only seconds before he was last killed, just out of the man's periphery, and had eyes only for him, his mind focused on nothing but the kill. He crouches by the edge, low and hidden in the shadows, and waits.

"Fuck," the man mutters as he tries, and fails, to stand. Good luck with that buddy, he cut the achilles tendon. He's not going to be able to use that leg for a long, long time. "Godsdamnit, now I've left fucking evidence. Shit."

"I wouldn't worry about that," Tommy drawls, too amused to hold back his response, mouth curling into a toothy grin. The man's head whips around, a look of pure shock that morphs into terror, just just in time for Tommy's sword to meet his neck and tear through his flesh like a knife through butter. It's his own fault really. Who doesn't notice a body disappearing seconds after killing the person?

Tommy takes a deep breath and lets it out with a smile. "One down, two to go." He hops off the crate, anger beginning to resume its steady burn in his chest, and takes a quick look over his clothes. With a wave of his hand his blood splattered clothes are sent to his inventory, replaced by his 'emergency murder attire'. It's a good thing the only witness is dead. That and he has a habit of walking through the backstreets whether he needs to or not, otherwise he might have been seen. He does make a note to think of a better name for his 'murder clothes'. Would self defense clothes be better? No, that just sounds shit. It's not *technically* a villain outfit so he can't call it that so what would be good? Whatever, that doesn't matter right now. Right now he has shiteheads to kill.

He pulls up the hood he sewed on after last time in case he ever needed the outfit again for whatever reason and makes sure it's secure before walking out of the alley, his face and hands the only parts of his body left with blood.

Having committed the name tags to memory he starts his search by looking for the first group's tags. He has a feeling the second one would be at the very least nearby. He doesn't remember their tags very well having only got a glance at them before he was killed. Wilbur would be disappointed, he taught him to always memorize the name tags so he would always know exactly who the enemy was in a fight.

He walks to the sight of the second attack, found amongst the sea of near identical alleys from the pool of blood without a source, and looks for any sight of the tags through the buildings.

“Finally, my luck is turning around!” Just visible in the distance are the name tags of the first and, most likely, the second group converging in a condemned building a few streets over, only a few blocks away from being out of render distance. Dumbasses, you’re not supposed to stick around after committing a crime, that’s like rule number one of breaking the law. Sticking around is how you get caught! Good for him though, amateurs are so much easier to find.

He makes his way over to the building, slipping through alleys and darting across empty streets, eyes trained on the tags at all times. He’s there in minutes and sneaks up to a window, peeking through to see the two groups, plus more he assumes to be their associates, arguing.

“No, *we* killed the brat!” one of them yells, getting into the face of another.

“No, *we* did! We can show you the fucking body if we have to!”

“Well so can we!”

“Liars!”

This is so perfect! If he wanted to he could just walk away and they’d end up killing each other by the end of the hour! Not that he’s going to, revenge is his to take, not theirs. He grins teeth bared and eyes full to the brim with malice, and slinks into the room, ducking behind some tattered furniture, practically in pieces, but just sturdy enough that he could, theoretically, sleep on it. He swipes his hand across the top and the corner of his vision lights up with the usual spawn set notification.

He still has yet to be noticed as he ducks behind a piece of furniture that was right behind the group of fighting men. He kind of wishes he had a bow, he’s always been a pretty great shot, after the last duel at least, but unfortunately he didn’t have one on him when he died. It’s probably possible to get one. Oh, or make one! That was always a good pastime. Taking time to whittle a bow and thread in the string instead of using a crafting table. One of the few things he refused to use the table for. After his failure of a duel he became somewhat obsessive when it came to bows and which ones he used and how likely he was to hit the target. He’d only use bows he made himself and knew would work perfect and trained endlessly until he hit exactly where he was aiming for every single time. Most thought it was stupid, but he couldn’t help it. He refused a repeat of that gods damned duel.

He creeps behind a yelling man, rolling his eyes at their stupidity, before leaping into the fray, sword already mid swing, and slices the man in half. The man fell to the ground in two and Tommy stood beside the corpse looking out at the shocked gathering of criminals covered in a spray of the fallen man’s blood. Prime, he loves netherite.

No one moves, the building’s occupants stuck in a stare off, Tommy staring at them and them staring at him. No one moves, no one’s eyes dart to their weapons, no one even blinks. He’d swear some of them weren’t even breathing. They all just stare, Tommy’s anger bubbling closer and closer to the surface with every second that passes, the people who tried to take away his second chance all he can see. Their stalemate seems like it’ll never end then-

Tommy moves.

He lunges forward, sword on the upward swing, towards the second of the men in the room. His eyes fly wide and he throws himself backward, putting himself just out of range of the slice to his chest, but not enough to avoid injury completely. He screams as the blade tears through his arm, the limb falling to the ground with a wet thump.

Tommy doesn't wait for the man to recover, using his momentum to continue forward he steps again and brings the sword down on the man's head killing him instantly. The others seemed to gather themselves enough to realize what was going on and started grabbing their own weapons. Tommy takes a split second to see what he's up against. There are seven people total in the room: three with guns, two with hands glowing with the precursor of powers and two dead. Tommy noticed the man with the camouflage power was one of the two he'd already killed which meant he wouldn't have to worry about someone playing chameleon while fighting. He recently learned what chameleons were and he has to say he quite likes the small animals.

The three holding guns stood shoulder to shoulder, preparing to fire their weapons, while the two, visibly, powered people ran for him.

"Fucking guns," he growls and deflects a bullet that comes too closer with his sword. Lucky for him, they were shit shots. A flat circle of light that looked suspiciously like a really sharp frisbee shot towards him from the left where one of the men had run to and Tommy slices it in half with his sword, both halves separating and flying behind him, embedding deep into the wall before sizzling out into nothing. Sharp light frisbees, good to know. He continues to dodge as the other powered person runs up beside him, hands glowing bright purple as opposed to the obnoxious yellow of the frisbees.

Tommy jumps back as the man punches and ducks, kicking the man in the gut and sending him flying back. Weak. He jumps over another frisbee and a stray bullet catches him in the side. He says stray because they're practically shooting randomly with how horrible they're shooting. Seriously, it's just sad.

He lands on his feet, crouched close to the ground, and casts a glance at his side. It's begun to stitch itself up, healing before too much blood could be lost, but one of his hearts starts bubbling downwards. Just a graze.

Purple glow guy shows up again and does the exact same punch as before. Fucking idiot. Tommy ducks and kicks the guy in the stomach again, but instead he's the one who flies back, an eruption of purple light accompanying his flight. Oh now he's just annoyed.

He hits the wall, back slamming exploding in pain on impact, and he falls to the ground, rolling quickly to avoid another wave of bullets. He rolls back to his feet, grunting as he rocks back on his heels as the pain hits him. He's lucky he wasn't closer to the wall when he went flying, if he'd hit it any harder something definitely would have gotten broken. Curse his hollow bones.

His health was considerably lower than it was when he started this fight and he curses under his breath. He rolls his shoulders and gets back into a defensive stance. His anger is making him sloppy, he knows it is, and he forces himself to start treating this more like a battle and less like an impulse fight. He refuses to lose. He takes a deep breath, shoving aside his anger

and focuses. The shooters are reloading, again, and the two using their powers are heading his way.

The frisbee guy sends another shooting Tommy's way and he dodges to the side, sliding on the ground under the next, and stops in front of the purple one again. Sure enough for the third time in a row the man sends the exact same punch his way, but instead of going down Tommy goes to the side, spinning so he ends up behind him. His sword flashes away to his inventory and he grabs the back of the man's shirt at the shoulders and continues to spin. His momentum carries the man with him and ends up in front of him just as the men finish loading their guns and start shooting.

The man takes the bullets, acting as a human shield as the gunman continue shooting until their guns are empty of bullets all over again, and Tommy tosses his body to the side, pulling out his sword once again. He doesn't stop as he starts towards the frisbee guy. A short range fighter against three long range. Prime, he wishes he had a bow.

He starts sending them at him faster, frisbees of death shooting through the air, each one missed by a fraction of what he'd like. He throws himself to the side of the next and this time it slices through his side. It was deeper than the bullet wound and he falters, falling to one knee, but he carries the momentum through to a roll back up to his feet. One stupid injury isn't going to take him down. He can feel his skin itch as his side threads itself back together and his hearts continue to fall, four and a half hearts gone now. Fuck, he doesn't have any food to bring it back up and his food is about to hit that point where injuries stop healing.

The man had obviously not expected him to be able to get back up after the last one and wasn't prepared for Tommy to continue his attack. The sword slices through him before he can blink. And then there were two.

"Cowards," one of the final two spits. Tommy recognizes him. He was the one who shot him from the alley. He's the real coward, he didn't even leave the shadows and killed him before he could get the chance to fight back. "Drop your weapon and face me like a man, one on one," he challenges, tossing his gun to the side. Good riddance, he hates those fucking things. "Unless you're too chicken?"

"Coward?" Tommy snarls. "Where was this when you murdered someone just for walking down the street?"

"It's nothing personal," he shrugs, smirking. "It's just business. Besides, it's not like the kid cares anymore."

Tommy's blood boils and he screams in rage as he runs at him, sword held down and two the side in preparation for a swing. Business? He tried to take away his second chance because of business? And he's *happy* about it. He's *proud* to have killed someone minding their own fucking business. Not only is that personal, it's the most personal you can fucking get.

A gun goes off and Tommy feels a sharp pain in his chest, stumbling forward from the force of it. Tommy scowls and switches his sword out for his axe, turning towards the second man he'd let slip his mind in his anger, and flings it at him. The man stumbles backward in shock at the action but it was too late for him to try and get away, the blade hitting him in the chest

barely a second later. Tommy turns back to the bitch who was now running for his disposed of gun with a look of panic on his face.

The man scrambles for the weapon, at some point tripping and too frantic to get up he starts crawling the last foot to get to it. Tommy steps on the weapon, pinning his hand between his foot and the gun, the man's head whips up toward him in fear. "What happened to a fair fight?" Tommy asks. Tommy leans down, tapping the gun to send it to his inventory, revulsion welling in his gut at having the gun in his possession, and the man's hand is crushed between the concrete and Tommy's foot.

"Why are you trying to kill me?" Tommy demands.

"Kill *you*?" he responds, incredulous. "You tried to kill us first!" The man attempts to free his hand, but he fails. Tommy kneels down, weight shifting to the foot on the man's hand, and uses one hand to lift the side of his mask, winking as horror dawns on the man's face. "You," he whispers, shaking. "How are you alive? We killed you!"

"That's not important," Tommy answers. "What is important, however, is why you tried to kill me."

"I'm not saying shit!" the man yells and tries to get away again. Tommy sighs and stomps his foot onto the man's back.

"How about this," Tommy starts. "You tell me why you're trying to kill me and maybe I won't *rip out your spine*. Deal?"

"You- you wouldn't, couldn't! You couldn't if you tried!"

"I think I could, maybe I should," Tommy pretends to contemplate. "I don't think it would be that hard..." He sets his hand against the back of the man's neck for good measure, fingers digging into his flesh. He wouldn't actually do it, he knows it would be too far even through his haze of anger, but the man doesn't need to know that.

"We were hired," the man admits, voice wavering as he shies away from Tommy's hand.

"By who?" Tommy presses, adjusting his grip. The man doesn't respond and Tommy digs his nails in further. "By who?" he repeats louder.

"I don't know! I don't know!" he yells. "I swear, I don't know."

"You don't know?" Bullshit. How could he not know?

"They didn't say who they were," he says. "The guy brought a letter and didn't say a word while he was here, didn't even move until we gave the thing back with our answer."

"Anything else?"

"No." Tommy tightens his grip. "No, no, I swear! That's all I know!" If that's it he might as well end it. It would be cruel to hold this out for any longer. He kinda wanted to punch the

guy but he's already toeing the line as it is. Instead he makes it quick and stabs him with his sword, a direct hit through the heart.

The man collapses to the ground and Tommy pulls his sword out of his back. Tommy scowls at the blade and wipes it on the man's shirt. It doesn't do much, there's still a lot of blood on it. He sends it to his inventory to clean later and starts over to his axe. It takes a second to pull it out of the body, but once he does he looks it over. This one too has a lot of blood on it but not as much as the sword had on it. Does he put it in his inventory to clean later or does he just hold onto it until it cleans itself? Another great thing about Netherite is that it runs hot. Since Netherite is from the Nether it tends to be rather warm and when it's left alone for long enough it'll eventually get hot enough that anything on it will just burn right off. There's a small enough amount that it should be good by the time he gets back to his apartment.

Tommy starts walking towards the front doors, axe trailing behind him, and he groans as he realizes how long the walk back home is. Not to mention his dwindling hearts and increasingly painful injuries, adrenaline is both a blessing and a curse. His steps slowly get heavier and heavier the further he goes, but he's had worse and he hardly lets that slow him down.

Prime I'm bored," he mutters as he walks, axe dragging along the ground behind him. He decides the best way to pass the time is to hum, to hum the L'Manburg anthem to be exact. He continues walking, every note of his hum bouncing between the buildings making it sound eerie and chilling. A haunting lilt of sorrow and pain as he remembers how everything used to be and never would be again. "It's a very big and not blown up L'Manburg..." he mumbles, the soft words barely loud enough for even himself to hear.

He hears a scream followed by a crash and turns his head in the direction of the sudden sound, looking over his shoulder without fully turning his body. A woman was on the sidewalk, a plastic bag of groceries spilled on the ground as the woman stared in terror, shaking as her wide eyes met his.

"You're- you're-" she stutters, mouthing a word he couldn't make out as she slowly shuffles backwards, eyes not leaving him even as she stumbles over something on the floor. One of the soup cans that rolled out of her bag if he could see right. Why is she so scared of him? It's not like he's going to hurt her. He's just minding his own business, bleeding to death and walking down the street covered in the blood of the people he's killed while holding the murder weapon. Nothing wrong with that.

He takes a step towards her and she stumbles backward, tripping over something or other and falls to the ground. He's blaming the soup can. She scrunches her eyes shut and holds her arms over her head to protect herself, frozen, as he walks towards her and right past without sparing her another glance. It isn't until he's across the street that he hears her scramble to her feet, her things hastily gathered with a few things left behind in her haste. He debates grabbing the box cookies for a few moments, but ultimately decides against it. It was open and all of them were covered in muddy water and he didn't exactly trust the puddles. He saw a spilled bottle of poison in one walking back from work one day, he even started carrying around some milk in his inventory because of it. Just in case.

Seeing the woman solidified something for him. He's being too obvious, he blames the blood loss. He's practically asking for heroes to come after him. Not to mention the risk of being followed and sightings of a person covered in blood are bound to be suspicious. Leading the police, or worse the heroes, to his home would not only probably get him arrested, but get him murdered by Drista. Especially since he's friends with a couple heroes and he'd rather not throw that away because of a stupid mistake. He doubts they'd be too happy to find out their friend killed people even if it was, technically, in self defense.

He sends his axe to his inventory before making his way over to a fire escape, blood dripping behind him. Why did he have to run out of fucking food? Climbing up the ladder is a struggle, each move pulling at half healed injuries, and when he finally flops onto the roof he has to lay still and take a breather for a few minutes, every bump in the roof digging into his already bruised and scarred back making what was normally a small annoyance a sharp nearly unbearable pain. It got harder and harder to breathe as his wounds sluggishly bled onto the rooftop, his wounds pulsing with pain and his limbs aching. Eventually he forces himself up knowing if he stays any longer he wouldn't be able to get up again with how tired he was becoming.

He passes by another cool box thing as he drags himself along and taps it to set his spawn, just in case he doesn't make it back to his apartment before he bleeds out. There's no doubt in his mind he's going to bleed out soon, he just hopes he can make it to his apartment and grab some of the minimal food he keeps on hand, more specifically the bowl of whipped cream he keeps in his fridge. It would suck if he was about to make it then died and had to walk all the way back from where'd he'd last set his spawn where he killed the first guy.

"Gods this sucks," he mutters, huffing as the words come out as more of a wheeze than a discernible sentence, wincing as the attempt at speaking made his chest ache. He coughs and blood bubbles in the back of his throat, he hasn't got much longer left. He's almost there, he can make it. Injuries rarely mean the fight is over. If he were to stop fighting every time he got heavily injured he would have died back in the Independence war, for good he means. If he can keep going then, he can keep going now.

His feet are dragging against the roof by the time he gets close enough to his apartment to think he might make it, rather than weak hope with nothing to actually support it. Fuck, he doesn't want to die again. Just because he can't stay dead doesn't mean he wants to die *four times in one night*. At least when he lost two in a day he had the excuse of being nine, now he's just being weak. It's pathetic. He's going soft. He needs to start training again. Maybe there's a gym or something he can go to. Is there a such thing as a sword fighting gym? Probably not, but it wouldn't hurt to check, right?

He started to feel light headed as his heartbeat pounded in his ears louder and louder with every step. He was going down, he knew it, he wasn't going to make it to his apartment. At least he set his spawn closer than it was so he doesn't have to walk too far. On the plus side he won't have to do it while injured. Unless someone else decided to be a dickhead of course.

He feels the prickle on the back of his neck that meant someone was watching him and looks up only to come eye to eye with Siren. Siren is frozen, staring at him in shock, and Tommy stares back. It's Siren, he likes Siren, he should say hi. He grins, something that feels weak



and wobbly even to him, and raises his foot to take a step forward. It was more letting his weight fall onto the new foot than an actual step but it was something. Siren's eyes widen in fear with that step and Tommy can't help but be confused, why is Siren scared? They're friends! Siren is his friend, yeah he likes Siren. He tries to assure Siren it's safe, he would never hurt his friend, Tommy wouldn't let anyone hurt Siren, but his mouth wouldn't, couldn't, form the words needed. Tommy shuffles his foot forward to take another step, hand reaching out to console his friend, but it catches on the edge of the roof. He pitches forward, Siren watching in shock, as Tommy tumbles over the edge of the building, pain erupting over his body as he falls head first toward the ground.

He doesn't even make it that far.

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"For fucks sake," he whispers as he blinks away the haze of respawn, hand holding his head, before peaking around the corner of the roof cold box. Siren is out of render distance and Tommy jogs back in his direction. He finally catches sight of Siren leaning over the edge in disbelief and ducks behind a large box storage thing.

Siren's hand raises to his ear, "Yeah, yes, sorry...I'm- I'm fine...I saw the warehouse killer." Siren winces as if whatever is being said is too loud and Tommy decides he'd rather not get caught today and climbs down the opposite side of the building from Siren. Blood deficient him was stupid, why would he think trying to say hi to Siren was a good idea? All that would do is give him away! He just needs to get home and clean up. While respawning gets rid of his own blood on him it does nothing for other peoples and he's still covered in quite a bit.

He's more sneaky about getting home from there, taking back alleys and sticking to the shadows, and this time doesn't leave a trail of blood behind him since he's no longer dragging an axe or bleeding from he doesn't know how many different places. It was a bummer not being able to run across the rooftops, but he wouldn't have been able to do that anyway with his injuries. He'll just have to go for a run later when he's not a walking murder case.

He finally arrives at his apartment and it's like a shining ray of light in the dark. Respawning may get rid of injuries, but that doesn't mean phantom pains go away as quickly. His limbs and back ache as he clambers through his window, making sure there isn't any blood left behind him, and heaves a sigh of relief when he's safe inside with the window shut. That alone lifted a weight off his shoulder, he can finally relax.

He wastes no time ridding himself of his bloodied clothing and throws them in the sink to soak before he washes them, both his street clothes and stabby-stabby clothes. Thankfully, the blood hasn't set on his street clothes long enough to stain, but the rest of his clothes weren't so lucky. Not that it really mattered when they'd only ever be used for killing and that would, for the most part, only ever be seen by the soon to be dead.

After he'd gotten cleaned up and his clothes were all washed and hung to dry he puts on his comfiest pair of pajamas and falls onto the couch. He raises his arms in the air, sleeves falling to his elbows, and wills his hearts into existence. The ink fades in view and seconds later he's

staring at his usual five hearts and five tally marks, four in a line with the fifth crossed through them.

He died five times.

It was weird to think about. He spent most of his life thinking he'd be dead after three and now he's still alive after having died nine times total in his life. "Prime, nine times," he whispers, not quite believing it, as he lets his arms fall. He died four times to Dream and five to random people who tried to kill him for no reason, the fifth because he bled out which was *shit*.

"I really can't die, huh?" It hadn't really settled in until then. Sure he saw the symbol which he now knew meant *infinity* and he died and came back like nothing happened, but it didn't feel real until now. He died five times in the past week, which is pathetic as fuck, but he's still here like nothing happened. Other than the scars at least. Not that it really matters, they mostly just blend into all his previous ones.

"Take that Dream!" he whoops. No more fucking Limbo! Fuck yeah! Sure he technically goes to Limbo for a little bit, but it's hardly long enough to count. Not even a minute in Limbo translates to not even a second in the overworld so he doubts that would even count. He barely even realizes he's in Limbo before he's gone again and Kristen usually waves to him as he speeds by which is nice.

Things really have changed for the better. There were still a few shitty things here and there he had to put up with but for the most part he'd say things are better. Now if only he could figure out who's trying to kill him and why. The sooner he deals with that the sooner he can move on with his life and live in peace. If he ever gets antsy for a fight he'll just join a gym and spar with people there. He was raised in war, he'll get desperate for a fight eventually, but it'll be better than dealing with assassins twenty-four seven. He doubts he'll find someone who can wield a sword while there, but it's always worth a shot. It'd be nice to spar against someone who can actually use one. He hasn't had a good sword fight that didn't hold the threat of death in ages.

Tommy can feel his eyes slipping shut, his mind too tired to support his body enough to stay awake, and Tommy peels himself off the couch. "Hell, dying takes a lot out of you, Prime." He collapses into bed and lets the dark of sleep take him away.

## Chapter End Notes

Fun fact:

Chameleons can see ultraviolet light and can see 360 degrees around them.

# Chapter Twenty

## Chapter Summary

The heroes check out the scene of the crime and Tommy hangs out with a friend.

## Chapter Notes

Tw's:  
violence, blood

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“They’re all dead?” Bad asks, looking towards the one who brought the news of the boy being killed. When they arrived at the warehouse they were met with the entire group dead. Not that it mattered, they would have been killed anyway. Other than the ones that were to be turned, of course. It is a loss to lose their power. They would have been useful to the Egg’s plans.

Somewhere deep inside he felt sad, but he’s grown used to ignoring it. The Egg tells him to ignore things that aren’t important.

“All of them,” she confirms. There really was no reason to bring the Cadavers then. With no one to kill he has no need for them at the moment.

“And the brat? Is he dead?”

“No.”

The sadness turns to relief but still he ignores it.

Bad bristles, tail whipping around in anger. “Why isn’t he dead!”

“They all claimed to have killed him, but he was seen walking to work this morning,” she responds.

“Imbeciles! Useless!” Bad screams, pacing back and forth, tail lashing behind him. “Useless, useless, useless!” The Egg was too far away to heed his commands, to rip and tear at the source of his anger, which unsettled him. He ignored the odd sense of hope that gave him. Being too far from the Egg always left him anxious, but he would be back soon.

He grabs his fellow follower by the neck, his clawed fingers digging into the soft flesh making blood drip, and lifts her into the air. “You were supposed to hire *competent* ones.”

“I was told they were,” she chokes out, red eyes flaring. His brain jolts as the Egg scolds him, she is needed. He sets her down and she lets out a breath of relief, taking a step away. He sends his apologies back to the Egg, he got carried away. She was important to the Egg so she will not be harmed. None is as important as him, the Egg reminds and Bad sinks into the feeling of the Egg’s forgiveness, the ever merciful Egg. He’s truly chosen the best path.

“The heroes, they’re arriving.”

“We’re leaving,” Bad says and the Cadavers start sneaking back through the rear entrance to the building. “And you will look into hiring more competent pests to do our bidding.”

“Understood.”

And as Bad turned to make his way back to the Egg somewhere deep down, hidden away from himself, inexplicably, he grieved.

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“Holy shit, hold shit, holy *shit*,” Siren chants under his breath as he scrambles for the edge of the roof. That was him, the guy from the warehouse! Siren leans over the edge and, like the last five times he checked, there was nothing there. There was no body and he checked quickly enough the first time for him to have run away, he’s not sure if it would even be possible to with injuries like that. Not to mention the fall.

“*Siren?*”

“Yeah, yes, sorry,” Siren says, putting his hand to his comm in his ear despite not needing to.

“*Are you alright? Your audio cut out,*” Sam says.

“I’m- I’m fine,” Siren swallows. “I saw the warehouse killer.”

There’s a crash over the line and Sam’s voice becomes more frantic. “*What happened? Are you hurt? Full debrief, now.*”

“Nothing happened,” Siren says incredulously. “I looked up and he was just there, staring at me from a roof over, then he smiled and stepped towards me, but tripped or something and fell over the edge.”

Sam lets out a choked noise of shock, “*He fell?*”

“Yeah, but he never hit the ground, at least I don’t think he did. There’s no body, but there is a little blood,” Siren says. “I can’t be sure if he teleported or if someone teleported him to them or if it’s something else entirely.”

“*Adding teleportation to the list of possible abilities,*” Sam mutters, only just audible over the line. “*Is there anything else?*”

“He was covered in blood,” Siren adds. “He was wearing the same mask and outfit from before, but there was a hood this time. The mask has a bunch of swirls and stuff, but I couldn’t see his eye color, there was a black mesh or something over the eye holes.”

“*Got it,*” Sam says. “*Is there anything else?*”

“No, I don’t think so,” Siren responds. A few moments pass. “I’m going to see where he was coming from.”

“*Siren-*”

“I’ll be fine, Sam. He was headed in the opposite direction and I’m a good fighter,” Siren assures him.

Sam sighs, “*Alright, but I’m sending backup.*”

“Sounds good,” Siren agrees. “Signing off.” Siren deafens his comm and marks down his location before starting off in the direction the killer had come from. Lucky for him, not so much for whoever’s it is, there was a trail of blood Siren was able to follow. It was hard to see at times, but it was enough to lead him back to an abandoned building.

When Siren entered he switched his comm back on, “I found another warehouse murder.”

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After finding the building Siren was sent back to the Hero Tower to rest while the police did a first look over. Him and the rest of the warehouse murder team were called in a few hours later to do their own analysis. The car ride was mostly silent as they all sat in the back on the ride over. The car chosen for this trip was a van, a white one, you know, the ones parents always tell you never to go near? Sorry Phil, he got near the van.

“Are you going to be able to hold your lunch this time?”

Siren stares at his brother gobsmacked while Empath snickers beside him. “It *smelled*,” Siren defends. Empath snorts, still trying to hide behind her hand. “It did!”

“It really did,” Flare bemoans as Morph rubs circles on his back in mock comfort.

“I know mi amor,” Morph says, pretending to be apologetic while trying not to laugh and Flare glares at him.

“It *really* smelled,” Siren repeats with emphasis. “Come on, your sense of smell is nearly as good as mine, you have to admit it was nauseating.”

Blade is silent for a long while, staring unblinkingly at Siren before, “It did.”

“Ha!”

“It smelled worse than the Logsted sewer system,” Empath adds with a shiver of disgust.

Siren blinks, “Why do you know what the Logsted sewer system smells like?”

“No.”

“But-” Siren tries to protest.

“No.” Empath repeats, staring blankly at him.

“Anyway,” Siren changes the subject, clearing his throat. “It wasn’t as bad as last time. None of the bodies were older than an hour when I got there and there weren’t any of those ones with the plant blood.”

“Those one’s smelled the worst,” Flare mumbles, relived in none being there.

“How do we know it’s the same killer?” Totem asks.

“Besides the matching murder method, similar location type, and spotting the suspect of the previous warehouse murder nearby covered in blood?” Blade asks sarcastically.

“Yep, sorry, stupid question,” Totem nods, sitting back in his seat, embarrassed.

“Oh lay off Blade,” Empath says lightheartedly. “You’ve gotta be nice to the newbies.”

“I’m not *that* new,” Totem mutters, pouting. Empath just shrugs with a smile that says she knows exactly how long he’s been a hero and is going to tease him regardless. The perks of knowing him most of his life Siren supposes.

“We’re here,” Blade announced as the car stops and everyone files out.

“Thank fuck,” Flare sighs. “This one doesn’t smell half as bad.”

“Agreed,” Siren says and the two nod at each other.

“Dramatic,” Totem coughs into his fist and the two glare at him while Empath pretends she isn’t smiling.

“The police have already taken away the bodies,” Blade says, leading the way to the building.

When Siren entered the building he was relieved to not be hit with a wall of rot. He already knew it wouldn’t smell that bad, it hadn’t that morning so why would it now, but there was still a small part of his mind that expected the odor.

The bodies had all been moved, as Blade had said, but there was chalk sketching out the bodies and the blood had been left behind. Blade steps forward and makes quick work separating the blood, easier this time without bodies to move on top of it.

“I found blood from nine different people,” Blade says and carefully moves a portion of each floating puddle of blood into a waiting container.

“There were only seven bodies,” Siren says.

“Which means one of them must be from the killer!” Morph exclaims.

“Or another victim,” Empath adds. “If there are two extra blood samples then at least one of them must be from another victim. We’ll have to get it tested to see if it lines up with the blood from the alley murder.” At this point they were almost certain whoever killed the man in the alley over a month ago was the same person to commit the warehouse murder and if the blood samples matched that would be the link they needed for the cases. Not that it would bring them any closer to finding the suspect since they spent over a week looking for a match the first time round.

“Good point,” Morph admits.

“Empath, could you check if the emotions match?” Blade asks and Empath nods.

“Do you need any help?” Siren asks.

“I should be alright,” she denies. “It’s not as bad as last time. Less people means less emotions so it’ll be a lot easier to handle.” Siren nods and Empath kneels to the ground to get a feel for the culprit’s emotions. Meanwhile Siren starts walking around to get a good feel for the crime scene and look for clues.

After half an hour the team regroups in front of the building.

“What have we found?” Blade kicks off the discussion.

“It’s the same person,” Empath starts off, confirming despite it being a formality. “The emotions matched. He was mostly angry, even more so than last time, but he also felt proud and even somewhat amused at times.”

Blade nods. “Anything else?”

“The suspect left through the front door leaving a trail of blood behind,” Flare says with Morph nodding beside him. “We suspect the trail was from a mixture of the suspect dragging his weapon behind him and blood dripping off his clothes and injuries.”

“That matches up with what I’ve found as well,” Siren agrees.

“Agreed,” Blade adds. “The blood by the entrance was a mix from multiple different people so it was likely at least one of them was from the suspect.” Blade turns to Siren. “Do you recall seeing a weapon anywhere on the suspect’s person?”

“Not that I’m aware of,” Siren shakes his head.

“That means it’s possible he ditched the weapon nearby,” Blade deducts. “I’ll make sure the police are notified to keep an eye out for the weapon on top of additional witnesses. Is there anything else?”

“Nothing that we weren’t already told,” Totem says and everyone nods.

“Alright,” Blade says. “We’re done for the day. Everyone get some rest. We’ll reconvene tomorrow at the Tower for the meeting.” Everyone makes their goodbyes for the day and drifts away to do their own thing. Siren tries to make a run for it while he can, but Blade easily catches up to him, laying a heavy arm across his shoulder to stop him from jetting off. “Where do you think you’re going?”

“To the cafe!” Siren responds. “Now let go or I’ll be late.”

“You need to rest, Wilbur,” Techno says. “The kid can go one day without seeing you.”

“He *can*,” Wilbur responds. “But I want to see him. One of the bloody alleys was *really* close to his apartment and the sighting was even closer than that! Please, Techno, I have to see if he’s alright.”

Techno sighs, “Alright. Just be home for dinner or Phil will throw a fit.”

“Got it!” Wilbur says and darts out the second Techno’s arm is lifted.

“And no patrol tonight!” Techno calls after him. “Phil will kill you if you go out and so will I!”

“Got it!” Wilbur yells back and finally makes it out of hearing range. Now to change out of this suit and head over to the Rose Petal cafe.

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When Tommy arrived at work he didn’t expect it to be to Clementine constantly checking around corners and windows. When he asked her what was wrong she told him she heard weird noises the night before and was worried someone broke in. Realizing what she heard was him raging toward the door after he was killed multiple times he made up some story about forgetting things and coming back for them to calm her down, making sure to apologize for disturbing her. Thankfully it worked and Tommy was left feeling guilty for scaring her as he got to work on finishing a dress.

He remembered that he’d finally get to hang out with Fundy later that day and was barely able to focus on his work in his excitement. Clementine must have noticed because she made him leave early. He resisted at first, but ultimately gave in. He was grateful for it and headed off for Niki’s with the intent of bringing Clementine a scone the next day to make up for it.

His excitement was tapered once again by guilt. He lied to Fundy, and subsequently to Niki and Wilbur and Clementine, and with nothing to distract him other than his thoughts that’s what he found himself focusing on.

There is no other friend.

When he asked Fundy to hang out it was because another friend was dragging him out and he wanted an excuse to ignore him but that was a lie, he just needed an excuse to invite Fundy to hang out. It was safer, less of a chance for him to say no, right? And it’s not like it’s that bad of a lie, right? Yeah, it’s alright, it’s not that bad.



But it is. It is that bad. He's acting like Dream. He's manipulating the people around him to get what he wants and how is that any different than what Dream did to him? And to Tubbo? And Ranboo? And literally everyone on the server?

*No*, he is not like Dream. He is telling a little white lie, while bad, it's not as bad as what Dream did. *He* fucked with people for his own fun, he ruined lives and tore people to shreds because he thought it was fun and he enjoyed playing with people's lives like a puppet master with strings. It was all a game for him, that's not what Tommy's doing.

He is not like Dream.

He pushes away all thoughts of Dream and tricking Fundy and pushes open the door to the cafe. He's greeted with a somber atmosphere as the building's occupants all watched the news intently.

"What's everyone so worried about?" Tommy asks, stopping in front of the counter where Niki's leaning against the countertop, wringing her gloved hands as she worryingly watches the news.

She startles and quickly stands up, looking at Tommy. "You haven't heard?" Tommy shakes his head. "There was another attack last night. Same guy who killed those guys in the warehouse. That's what they're saying," Niki responds, her eyes glued to the tv as she spoke with her hands continuing their nervous movement.

"Niki, hey, I'm sure everything will be okay," Tommy reassures her, lightly taking her hand and pulling it away. It was starting to look painful. "I'm sure they'll catch the guy in no time and you won't have to worry anymore, yeah?"

"I'm not worried about me," she says, but doesn't pull back her hand even if he can tell she wants to wring her hands again. "I'm worried about you. There was a *sighting* a couple blocks from your apartment and most of the attacks happened in Lower L'Manburg."

"Shit, really?" Fuck, he really needs to be more careful. In his defense he's not used to having to hide when he kills people. Usually it's the government telling him to do it, cough cough Wilbur cough cough. Especially since most of the times he's killed people it was during the wars and battle which meant everyone was killing people and he wasn't exactly an exception.

"Promise me you'll stay safe Tommy," Niki pleads. "Don't go out after dark and make sure you lock all your doors."

"I promise." She doesn't need to know he's lying. "I'll be fine, Niki. As long as I don't piss the guy off I'll be right as rain," Tommy jokes. Niki doesn't laugh, but she does seem to be holding back a smile so he'll count it as a win.

"Enough about this," Niki says suddenly, pulling away her hand and shifting around some things on the counter. "What would you like?"

"A scone for Clementine," Tommy says. "And...and apple turnover. Gotta go with one of the favorites today."

“An apple turnover it is.” She starts to turn away to get his food, but he remembers something.

“Wait, can I get a coffee too? On top of the hot chocolate?”

“Sure thing, same as last time?”

“I guess? I don’t really remember what I got but it was good so yeah.”

“Coming right up.” Perfect, he’ll drink the hot chocolate now and put the coffee in his inventory for his next fight. Strength potion here he comes! He forgot extra food, fuck. He’ll get some before he leaves.

“Thanks Niki,” he says as she hands over his order and he places the money on top of the till, balancing the coins on the ledge. “I’ll see you before I head out.” She nods with a soft smile, progress, and Tommy takes his stuff back to his table. The coffee and the scone go to his inventory for later and Clementine respectively and he starts in on his turnover.

“There are no ideas as to the suspects identity at this time,” the tv says and Tommy tunes in. It’ll be better to know what people are saying about him. “Hero Siren ran into the suspect late last night and while there was no fight we were told to remind everyone that this is an extremely dangerous individual and that he should be avoided at all costs. Do not engage.”

“There are no pictures at this time, but witness reports state he can be seen wearing a red mask with a black shirt and pants. He wears a hood, but his hair is suspected to be blonde. In all sightings the suspect was covered in blood and has been rumored to carry around an axe or similarly large blade.”

Tommy decides to tune it out from there. He really needs to be more careful. Sure most of that isn’t overly important information, but it’s still information and any at all can be used against him.

“Crazy, right?” Wilbur asks, settling down across from him. “To think this guy’s killed over two dozen people and still hasn’t left enough behind to give away his identity.”

“Two dozen people?” Holy fuck he didn’t realize he’d killed so many. It made sense though. Nineteen the first time around, seven the second and the guy in the alley. There’s the other guy too, the one from his first night out on the town, but he doesn’t know if they know about that one or not. Knowing that it’s the same person he means, he remembers reading about the investigation online.

“Yeah,” Wilbur says, doing a shit job to hide how nervous he actually is. Seems like everyone’s on edge. “I heard they were brutal too. An *axe*? That must have been horrible.”

“Yeah, must be,” Tommy agrees noncommittally. He agrees that it’s not a fun way to die, but dying isn’t fun anyway. At least he goes right for the kill and rarely ever prolongs it so it’s not like he’s being overly cruel. He’s just giving them a taste of their own medicine.

“Enough of this crazy shit,” Wilbur suddenly says. “Let’s move on. How are things going at work?”

“Good,” Tommy says, turning his attention fully back to the conversation. “I haven’t started Quackity’s suit yet since the materials I want were out of stock so that’ll take a while, but I’m making good progress on that dress I showed you. I should be able to finish it with a couple more hours of work.”

“I seriously don’t know how you can do all that by hand,” Wilbur chuckles. “How are your hands not always cramped?”

“Yeah, it can get pretty cramped sometimes,” Tommy laughs, flexing his hand a few times like he’s working out a cramp.

“And you don’t use sewing machines because…”

“They are horrid machines that deserve to be left to rot,” Tommy completes Wilbur’s sentence, looking down at him. How could he think he’d ever do such a thing? Preposterous!

“Yes, yes, the devil machines.”

“Exactly,” Tommy nods. “They’re loud and annoying and I wouldn’t touch one even to throw it in lava.” Okay maybe to throw it in lava, but not a second more!

“Oh, so it’s like you? Loud and annoying, right?”

“How *dare* you! I am o-fen-ded,” Tommy says. “How could you compare me to those *things*?” Wilbur snorts, holding back his laughter as best he can before giving up and starting to laugh.

“I’m sorry,” Wilbur says through his laughter. “I- I don’t mean to laugh.” He couldn’t even finish his sentence without dissolving into laughter. “Fuck, sorry, sorry.”

“You’re not sorry,” Tommy glares. “Not in the slightest.”

“Not in the slightest,” Wilbur agrees through his laughter. Tommy bites into his pastry, ignoring Wilbur bar a few glares here and there, and eventually Wilbur calms down enough to speak. “Sorry, really.”

“It’s fine,” Tommy responds, words clipped. “It’s perfectly fine.”

“I’ll buy you a scone.”

“Two.”

“Two.”

“And a bowl of whipped cream.”

“Deal,” Tommy grins and Wilbur rolls his eyes.

“Little gremlin.”

“Bitch!” Tommy yells as Wilbur leaves to buy him some scones and whipped cream. Perfect! Now he has food to put in his inventory for the next time he gets hurt.

“Your scones, my liege,” Wilbur says and drops them onto the table as he falls back into his seat. The bowl following suit a second later albeit more carefully as the bowl is more fragile than the pastry bags.

“Thank you peasant,” Tommy says and snatches the scones off the table pretending to put them on the seat next to him as he sends them to his inventory. The bowl is placed next to his turnover before said turnover is promptly dipped into said whipped cream.

“So,” Wilbur starts and Tommy’s eyes dart up to him before returning to his pastry. “Niki told me you’re hanging out with a friend later. Do I know them?”

“I don’t know,” Tommy shrugs. “His name’s Fundy.”

“I know about Fundy, but Niki said another friend was forcing you out of the house,” he smirks. “So? Who is it?”

“None of your business, that’s who.”

“I’m just curious.”

“So? It’s still none of your business.”

“Okay,” Wilbur gives in, hands going up in the universal sign for giving up. “I won’t pry.”

“Good.” He needs to remember to be careful around Wilbur. He found out his name somehow and he’s been letting down his guard recently, which is never a good thing to do.

“Look, Tommy,” Wilbur says, voice turning serious enough that Tommy goes tense, looking up at Wilbur warily. “If you ever feel like you aren’t safe in your apartment you’re welcome to come stay with us for a while. I know you aren’t a big fan of Techno and you haven’t met Phil yet, he’s my dad if I haven’t mentioned it before though I’m pretty sure I did, but it’s safe and we have a spare room and you’re welcome to use it.”

With Wilbur’s ramble coming to an end Tommy sighs in relief. He got a bit worried there with the tone Wilbur was using. “I’m fine, Wilbur. I’m perfectly safe.”

“There’s someone going around killing people, Tommy, in *Lower L’Manburg* where you *live*. That is the epitome of danger. I’m worried about you, Tommy. I don’t want you to get hurt. Well, I’m always worried about you really, but more so with this guy going around stabbing people and you know what I mean so I’ll stop now,” Wilbur rambles nervously.

“I get what you mean,” Tommy assures him then sighs. “If it’ll make you feel better, if I ever feel like I need to, I’ll stay over at your place for a bit, okay? But not unless *I* think I’m in danger, got it?”

“Understood,” Wilbur responds with a smile.

Tommy looks up and his eyes widen as he catches sight of the time. “Fuck I’m going to be late!” Tommy shoves the last bite of his turnover in his mouth, only after piling the rest of the whipped cream on top of course, then gulps down the rest of his hot chocolate.

“Stay safe, Tommy,” Wilbur says and leaves to go speak with Niki. Tommy nods dismissively as he tries to stop himself from choking.

He finally finishes chewing and swallows the pastry then rushes through cleaning up his area and speeds towards the front door. “Sorry Niki!” He calls behind him, aware of his broken promise to visit her before leaving to meet Fundy, and exits the cafe.

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“Sir?”

“What?” Schlatt snaps, writing on a document while holding his head with his other hand, a half empty bottle barely a foot away.

“I’m leaving now.”

The pen freezes. “Leaving?” Schlatt questions, looking up to glare at Fundy.

“Y-yes sir,” Fundy says. “I requested the time off a few days ago and it was approved.”

“I didn’t approve that.”

“Ah, you did, sir,” Fundy corrects cautiously. “I have your signature right here.” Fundy timidly lifts the paper from the top of his clipboard and shows the signed approval. He’s had the paper sitting on top of his clipboard the entire day and he’s so excited about it he’s hardly been able to focus on his work.

“Whatever,” Schlatt scoffs and turns back to his paper. “You’re staying late tomorrow.”

“Yes sir,” Fundy says, barely hiding his grin as he hurriedly leaves the office. The second the doors close behind him he’s beaming and walking as fast as he can through the hall without running. He doesn’t mind having to stay late tomorrow, it’ll be worth it. He’s going to make a friend!

Fundy dumps his clipboard with all its notes on the passenger seat and climbs behind the wheel. The drive to the cafe was quick, if a little hectic, he only ran through *one* stop sign thank you very much. It was the cars own fault for crashing into each other.

Fundy parks the car and nearly falls flat on his face getting out of the car, his foot got stuck. He’s going to be late! He makes sure his car is locked before speed walking to the front of the cafe. Will he be waiting inside or in front of the building? What if he’s too late and his other friend already got there and they left already? What if he decides he’s too boring and ignores him the entire time? What if-?

Never mind he's waiting in the front.

"Fundy!" Tommy greets with a smile. "Glad you made it."

"Yeah, got a little worried for a minute there," Fundy laughs. "The boss wanted to keep me a while longer."

"That sucks," Tommy snorts. "Let me know if you want me to get rid of him for you."

Fundy snorts, "I wish. Unfortunately, I think someone would notice the president go missing."

Tommy sighs, "Yeah, too bad."

"So," Fundy says after a few moments of awkward silence. "When's your friend getting here?"

"Oh, he canceled," Tommy says with an awkward shrug. "It's just us."

"Oh, okay then," Fundy responds with a jerky nod, wringing his hands. "Where to?"

"I was thinking we could sneak into Las Nevadas," Tommy says with a grin. "You're old enough and I could pass."

"I don't think Jester would allow that," Fundy responds. He really wouldn't. There are very few exceptions to the age rules when it comes to Jester's territory. The only way someone younger than eighteen is allowed in Las Nevadas is if they're going to a meeting with Jester, other than that minors are strictly forbidden. It's the only reason he's been able to go in and out of Las Nevadas as he pleased the past six years.

"It'll be fun," Tommy responds. "Even if we can't get into a casino it'll be fun trying to get in. I've done it before, got stopped before actually getting through the doors though. Maybe this time I'll get to play some slots!"

"I'm surprised you even made it that far," Fundy responds.

Tommy shrugs as if making it past *Jester* isn't just short of impossible. "We could do something else if you want." Fundy nods. "Any ideas?"

"What about Tubburger?" Fundy suggests. It's close to Las Nevadas so it's close to what Tommy wants to do and it's far enough away that it's unlikely Jester will be able to spy on them. Of course Tubbo does report back to Jester at times, but he's a lot more restrictive with what he shares so, again, less likely for Jester to spy on them.

"I don't know..." Tommy says, looking uncomfortable with the suggestion. Does he not like burgers? Or is there something else about it that he doesn't like? Maybe something with Tubbo? "Is that what you want to do?"

"I'm fine with anything," Fundy corrects quickly. "I don't mind."

After a few more seconds of Tommy looking apprehensive Tommy nods determinedly.  
“We’ll go there.”

“Are you sur-?”

“Of course! Now come on, all the good seats’ll be taken.”

“Tubburger’s usually pretty empty so- hey!” Tommy grabs Fundy’s hand and starts dragging him down the street and Fundy stumbles into a jog to keep up. Fundy manages to keep his footing and is actually able to keep up as Tommy drags him to Las Nevadas. Halfway there Fundy needs to sit on the ground for a second to catch his breath while Tommy idles nearby.

“How are you not even tired?” Fundy asks through heavy breaths.

Tommy shrugs. “I walk a lot.”

“Okay, yeah, I need a minute...”

“Sure thing,” Tommy says and throws himself down next to him. “So, Fundy, you work with Schlatt, right?”

“Yeah,” Fundy confirms. He must have heard him talking about it with Captain. “What about it? Need a favor?” It’s not often people ask him for favors, but it is something that happens. Knowing the president gives a person a certain level of status even if it’s all fake. He’s no more politically powerful than Tommy, despite what some may think.

“No,” Tommy responds. “Just wanted to make sure he’s not being a shit.”

“It’s alright,” Fundy responds with a shrug. “It’s a job.”

Tommy snorts, “Yeah, they can be pretty shitty.”

“Yeah,” Fundy agrees sadly. They sit in silence for a minute before Fundy lets out a breath and hauls himself to his feet. “We should get going.” Tommy bounces to his feet and starts walking quickly towards Tubbuger.

“Hurry up slowpoke!” Fundy rolls his eyes goodnaturedly and follows after him. When Tubburger finally comes into view Tommy slows down, enough that their pace goes from racing to crawling as Tommy eyes the restaurant warily.

As they approach the door it opens before either could grab it and Tubbo exits, smile on his face, laughing from something the other worker said. Tommy freezes and a look takes over Tommy’s face, one that looks like a mishmash of emotions ranging from pain to anger to happiness with grief shining through as the strongest of them all, but Tubbo barely pauses before continuing on his way in the opposite direction.

Tommy shoulders his way through the door and walks up to the counter as if nothing happened and Fundy doesn’t bring it up. They order food, Tommy getting two milkshakes and fries, and sit down to talk. He didn’t expect Tommy to be such a good conversationalist. From what he’s seen he’s usually short with new people and even cold at times, instead he’s

joking around and smiling like they're old friends. It's nice. He hasn't had a friend in a very long time and with each passing second he found there wasn't a single part of him that regretted accepting the invitation.

He's spent the past six years doing other people's bidding never doing anything for himself, his every waking moment dedicated to working off his debts and looking ahead to his freedom. Never once did he think he could make a life for himself outside of that until now. He always thought it would be too dangerous. He's a double agent for the president and one of the most notorious villains in the entire Esempii. Associating with him would never be safe, but he had to look out for Tommy anyway, so maybe, just maybe, he can take the risk.

Just this once.

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"There are no ideas as to the suspects identity at this time..." Tubbo scoffs and tosses the remote, the screen cutting to black as he stands from the couch and stretches his arms up and back until his back gives a satisfying pop.

"Do you think he'll come after us?" Ranboo asks nervously, playing with their hands in front of them.

"I don't know," Tubbo responds. "I think if we stay out of his way we'll be fine." Ranboo nods.

"I don't like this."

"I don't like it either Boo," Tubbo sighs.

"I don't think we could win a fight against him."

"Me neither," Tubbo, reluctantly, agrees. "We'll stay out of his way and he'll have no reason to attack us."

"What if he doesn't need a reason?"

"Then we defend ourselves until we can run," Tubbo says. He fears they won't be able to run. He's a good fighter, but that's in hand-to-hand. He's shit with a blade and he's never even picked up anything larger than a dagger, let alone a fucking axe. He knows there's no shame in running away, that there's nothing wrong with admitting you can't win a fight, but he can't help the fact that the thought makes him feel sick with fear and hatred. He can't admit he can't do something because that would mean he's weak and weakness isn't allowed.

Weakness means hours and hours of shitty training without a single break. Weakness means bruises and sprains and cracked and broken bones and he's come too far to go back to that now.

"We should train tonight."

Ranboo nods. "What do you want to train in?"



“Purple,” Tubbo responds, using the codename just in case. He knows there’s no one watching them, but it doesn’t hurt to be overly cautious.

Ranboo nods again. “I’ll finish up dinner.” Tubbo returns to the couch and lets his mind wander as he stares at the blank tv. He doesn’t mind training with Ranboo. It’s not like training with *him*. When he’s tired he can take a break and when he’d rather do something else Ranboo doesn’t question it, just makes a suggestion to do some stretches to cool down then they do something else for a bit. Nothing like how it was before.

“Dinner’s ready.”

“I swear to Chaos above if you’ve made spaghetti again I will throw you out a window.”

Ranboo gulps, “Well, look at that, I made fettuccine alfredo which isn’t spaghetti. Looks like I get to keep my spine.”

“What spine?” Tubbo snorts. “Besides, why wouldn’t you get to keep your spine if I threw you out a window?”

“It would break and I would have no spine,” Ranboo responds and sits down with the bowls of macaroni. He’s lucky he loves alfredo, otherwise he would have thrown him out anyway purely because of how similar fettuccine is to spaghetti.

They eat their dinner quickly, eager to get in some training for the first time in a while, but worried about running into the new villain going around murdering people.

“By the way,” Ranboo says as they clean up their plate. “Did that guy ever come back? The one who never had a milkshake?”

“No,” Tubbo responds, but as he says it a hazy memory enters the forefront of his mind. It was dark and a blurry figure was talking to them and was denying something? A second later it was gone and he shrugged it off. “Guess he didn’t want to come back.”

“That stinks,” Ranboo responds. “Sorry.”

“It’s alright,” Tubbo shrugs. “Didn’t really expect him to come back anyway.” It would have been cool to meet him again, he thought they would get along great just from the short conversation they had before, but it’s not a big deal. People come and go.

“Here.” Ranboo hands over his mask. “Are you ready?”

“Yup.” Tubbo slips on the mask and takes a deep breath. He always feels a little nauseous after teleporting so he holds his breath and holds tight to Ranboo’s arm. A second later there’s a staticy sound, one he’s come to associate with teleportation, as he’s surrounded in purple particles and in the time it takes for him to blink he’s suddenly somewhere completely different.

Fun facts:

Cows have 32 teeth in total but no top front teeth and they can smell from up to 6 miles away.

Otter holds hands when they sleep so they don't drift apart.

In the water a group of penguins is called a raft while on land they're called a waddle.

# Chapter Twenty-One

## Chapter Summary

Tommy sees something interesting then hangs out with a friend, Jester is up to some schemes and Puffy holds a meeting.

## Chapter Notes

Tw's:

I don't think there are any in this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Bye Clementine!” Tommy exclaims as he leaves the store. He smiles at her returned farewell and starts towards the nearest alley. It’s late and he doesn’t feel like having to deal with assholes thinking they can get a few bucks off him so he decides to take the rooftops home from then on. Most of the time at least. He’s not sure if he can get away with it as much if it's light out, but thankfully he usually leaves after dark anyway!

He grins as the wind blows through his hair, his heart lifting with every jump and leap across the gaps between buildings. He’s definitely doing this more often. He slows down as he hears voices coming from an upcoming alley and creeps along to peak over the edge to see what’s happening.

“I can’t do it,” the shorter huffs, obviously annoyed.

“You can,” the taller, who Tommy recognizes as the vigilante Enderwalk, encourages. “Just focus. Picture where you want to be in your mind and will yourself there.”

“What the fuck does ‘will yourself there’ mean?” the shorter, Aries, grumbles. He shouts in frustration, “We’ve been at this for almost two hours! Why can’t I fucking get it!”

“Calm down,” Enderwalk says. “Teleportation is all about calm and focus. Would- would you like to take a break?”

“No, no, I’ve got this.” Aries takes a deep breath and glares at the other side of the alley, frozen. Is he just staring at a fucking wall? Pretty weird if you ask him. A second later there’s a flurry of purple particles and Aries appears a few feet ahead of where he was standing. Not exactly where he was staring, but somewhere close. “I did it. I did it! Holy shit! Ender, I did it!”

“Good job!” Enderwalk congratulates, smiling so wide Tommy could tell even under the shitty mask they wore. Their excitement is so sweet his teeth are going to rot out. Good for Aries, but Tommy’s leaving now. Definitely nothing to do with the fact that Enderwalk still looks scarily similar to Ranboo and Aries has the same jacket as Tubbo, but it’s definitely not them because Ranboo is dead and Tubbo wouldn’t hang out with a Ranboo look alike so it’s definitely not them. Ranboo is dead and there’s no revive book, from what he can tell, which means that is not Ranboo and he’s leaving because he doesn't want to intrude.

Tommy’s mood didn’t improve much even as he ran excitedly across the rooftops, his mind returning to his dead friend even as he tried to force it away, to things that don’t make him want to curl up into a ball and cry.

He climbs into his window only a few minutes later and with a quick tap on his inventory changes from his street clothes to his pajamas. Prime they’re comfortable. He throws himself down on his couch and summons his laptop in one movement, mentally switching to its icon in his hot bar. He doesn’t have anything specific to look up but somehow he finds himself inputting a search that brings him to the latest news of Enderwalk and Aries, the search keyed into Enderwalk.

There isn’t much there. Articles about criminals they’ve taken down and sightings, most in Lower L’Manburg but a nearly equal many in Snowchester. While Aries and Enderwalk were known to separate at times they were a team through and through, where one was the other was surely quick to follow.

After a while having found all that he could find on Enderwalk he switched over to Aries. As opposed to Enderwalk who was known for his teleportation Aries was known for super strength. Something he found odd considering he just saw him teleport. He must be an enderman hybrid since he did see that it is possible to have a power and a hybrid ability, something he’s actually familiar with. He could just be keeping his hybrid ability on the down low since it’d be harder for people to find him, yeah that’s it, which also means Aries can’t possible be Tubbo because he already knows for a fact he’s a goat hybrid *not* an enderman hybrid.

Tommy turns off the computer at about midnight, after he spent about an hour researching what the news and heroes have on him, and climbs up to the roof. He leans back against the cold box and looks out across the city. It’s beautiful at night here. He still misses the stars, but it’s still an amazing view.

“You should be inside.” Tommy lazily looks up at the voice as Siren sits himself down a foot away. “It’s not safe.”

“I’m fine,” Tommy denies, relaxing back against the cold box again.

“There’s a killer on the loose,” he says as if Tommy needs a reminder. He’s not going to forget, how could he when he is the killer?

“I’m not worried,” Tommy says. “The news said he’s likely a revenge killer and I can’t remember pissing anyone off.” Apparently he did considering the people he’s killing are assassins sent to kill him.

“*Likely*,” Siren stresses. “They don’t know for sure.”

“Do you know?” Tommy asks.

“Well- we don’t *know*, but we suspect it, yes.”

“Then I’m safe.”

“We don’t know for sure,” Siren repeats. “Besides, we don’t know who it is or why they’re doing this. For all we know the guy is pissed at people for trampling the flowers in his garden and you might have pissed him off and don’t know it.”

“This is Lower L’Manburg dumbass,” Tommy says. “There are no gardens. Not like up in fancy-pants-rich-ville where you live?”

“And you know where I live?” Siren asks, amused.

“Of course.” Tommy smirks when Siren looks panicked for a split second, but he covers it well. Not well enough to hide from him of course, but good enough to hide from most. Unfortunately for him Tommy’s survived by reading people’s emotions in exile *alone*, let alone the rest of his life. Everyone’s emotions are easy compared to Dreams. “The Hero Tower.”

The minute relief in Siren’s expression was almost enough to make Tommy laugh. He only just managed to stop himself. “You got me there.”

“What did you think I was going to say? Kinoko? I haven’t got a single fucking idea where you live and I don’t care enough to fine out,” Tommy snorts. “The only reason I can think to try and find out is if you decide to fuck off to who knows where and stop visiting me. Then I’d find out where you live and I’d break your windows to steal all your whipped cream.”

“Good thing I don’t have any.”

“That’s stupid,” Tommy grumbles. “Why the fuck don’t you have whipped cream?”

“Tell you what,” Siren says. “I’ll keep whipped cream on hand should you ever break into my place.”

“Right choice,” Tommy says with a nod.

“You distracted me.” Tommy shrugs with an innocent expression while Siren rolls his eyes. “What I was *trying* to say is stay safe, alright? If you have someone you can stay with or if you can start taking safer routes to and from work, do it. I won’t force you, but it’s a good way to help you stay safe. Oh, and please stop leaving your apartment after dark.”

“Thank you oh so high and mighty hero for your advice, but I can’t do that, thanks but no thanks,” Tommy responds.

“There’s no one who will help you? No one at all?”

“No one I’m willing to go to,” Tommy snaps. “I don’t trust people. It’s not something I do. Besides, I don’t have the money for transportation every day and I haven’t the faintest clue how to drive. You hit a man once and suddenly you aren’t allowed behind a wheel.” Tommy shakes his head slowly with a disappointed look and Siren stares at him with an indecipherable mess of emotions. It was hard to tell but he thinks he could see shock and confusion and sadness and worry and hurt?

“I understand,” Siren says. “But if you ever need help, please, just tell me, okay? You don’t have to trust me, but if you’re in danger I’ll help, I swear.”

“That sounds an awful lot like trust, big man,” Tommy laughs.

“Don’t think about it as trust, think of it as me doing my job and you providing a tip for me to follow,” Siren shrugs.

“You are very dedicated to your job,” Tommy admits with a smile. “Fine, I’ll keep it in mind.” He won’t, but he doesn’t need to know that.

“I’m glad.” Siren lays back and gets comfortable on the roof.

“I just compliment you on being dedicated and you fall asleep on the roof which you told me never to do, hypocrite.”

“I’m not falling asleep,” Siren defends. “I’m resting. Besides, I wasn’t supposed to go out tonight anyway.”

“What? Did father dearest forbid you?”

“Yes actually,” Siren mutters, avoiding looking at Tommy.

Tommy cackles. “You live at home, don’t you!”

“I don’t-”

“You let your dad boss you around!”

“I-” Tommy’s laughter covers anything Siren tries to say in his defense and it takes a good couple of minutes before he can get a word in. “I live with my dad, yes, but!” Siren cuts off Tommy’s laughter before it can start again, “But! He’s a hero too, so it’s not me living at his house, it’s him living in the Tower where I also live so it’s different.”

“No it’s not.”

“Yes it is!”

“No it isn’t. How old are you, bitch? Fifty?”

“I’m twenty six!”

“Sure you are.”

“You know what, I don’t know why I come here,” Siren sighs.

“It’s an honor to be bullied by me. You should appreciate it.”

“Yeah right,” he scoffs then sighs. “I should be getting home though.”

“Curfew?” Tommy snickers as Siren glares. “Sorry, sorry.” He’s not sorry.

“Most people don’t survive on as little sleep as you do,” Siren answers. “I need to get at least a few hours in before starting my day.”

“I honestly just thought you were nocturnal.”

“I wish,” Siren chuckles. “See you soon, yeah?”

“Yeah, now fuck off bitch. You’re ruining the view.”

“Goodbye Tommy,” Siren laughs and leaves, using some weird metal hook shooting contraption to do so. He decided then and there he wanted one.”

“Goodbye Siren,” Tommy says, long after the man’s out of earshot. Tommy climbs to the top of the cold box, which is warmer than it used to be, combating the oncoming chill nicely, and lays out with his arms crossed under his head looking up at the sky. There he stayed until the sun began to peak over the horizon and he had to get ready for work.

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“Why couldn’t this wait until morning again?” Punz says by way of greeting as he enters Jester’s office.

“It is morning,” Jester responds with a smirk and a shrug.

“Yeah, three am,” Punz responds, unamused. “Now what’s so important?”

“I got that information you requested,” Jester says. “That and I have a new job for you.”

“Already?” Punz asks, smirking. “What a surprise.”

“I need you to find that new villain.”

“Trying to get rid of the competition?”

“Quite the contrary, trying to recruit it.”

“You think he’ll want to work with you?”

“Who knows,” Jester shrugs with a smirk. “But I’m sure I’ll be able to convince him. One way or another.”

“You always do,” Punz responds. “The information?”

“Of course,” Jester responds and reaches for a folder on his desk. “This will have everything you need.” Punz takes the folder and starts flipping through as Jester gives him the rundown. “There appears to be a cult taking over Pogtopia, though they will claim otherwise. All the details I could get on it are in the folder.”

“A cult,” Punz hums to himself as he flips through the folder a little more before closing it and holding it at his side. “Are we done here?” Jester waves his hand and Punz exits. Slime melts from the floor a moment later.

“Jester of Las Nevadas?”

“Tell me if you find anything on that new guy.”

“Yes, Jester from Las Nevadas.” Slime melts away again and Jester turns back to his folder on Tommy. There was more information than before, but still not enough to be satisfied. There’s just so many blanks. How can there be so little information about a person? It’s not possible. He’s checked for altering to his government file, but there was nothing except recently added information courtesy of the Hero Tower. He’s missing something.

Jester scoffs and tosses the folder back onto his desk, spinning around to look out on Las Nevadas, *his* Las Nevadas, the place he built from the ground up, piece by piece until he had his own villain empire. It took a lot to get to where he is and he’d do whatever it took to keep it. He almost lost it once and he’d *never* let it happen again.

Subconsciously his fingers run over the scar on his face, the dead and torn tissue on full display. He scowls and his fingers dig into the tender flesh. He hates the fucking thing. One day, he’ll get his revenge, nothing like the meager scene he orchestrated to cover it up for when he’s playing *hero*.

Jester grabs his glass of whiskey and holds it up towards the window as a salute to the one who did this to him. “Blood for the blood god.” He laughs bitterly before throwing back the drink. “Piece of shit,” he mutters and slams the glass onto his desk.

He’ll get back at *the Blade* if it’s the last thing he does.

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“Is everyone ready?” Puffy asks tiredly with three near all nighters under her belt. Everyone around the table nods and Puffy casts a quick, weary look to the door and when it doesn’t start opening she sighs. Maybe he’s finally starting to care about his own well being after their talk. “To start off this week’s meeting I’d like to talk about the newer recruits.”

“There’s always new recruits,” Jack mutters, but Puffy ignores him. It’s true, there always seems to be more joining their ranks. Something that would be celebrated if half of them actually wanted to be there and the other half weren’t arrogant and high on power and they had enough training to last longer than a few days without some debilitating injury before being sent into the field.



“A total of sixty percent of the new recruits were killed by two weeks of combat,” Puffy says. The statistic was being generous. Most died within the first few days, but because some lasted longer the statistic was changed. “Thirty five percent have received significant injuries, about three quarters of such people having permanent injuries that have put them out of commission. The remaining five percent are very much in over their heads and aren’t equipped to survive in hero life much longer.” Already they’ve had to deal with identity leaks, trainees bragging in their civilian forms leading to them or others getting killed because of it. On top of that the crime rate is constantly climbing not only in the lower districts, but the higher districts as well. There just aren’t enough of them to go around.

“There’s nothing we can do?” Phil asks, saddened by the death toll. Some of them truly wanted to be heroes, they were young and hopeful, but there are so many that don’t make it. That’s always been a fact, but now the numbers are higher than ever.

Puffy shakes her head, “Nothing. We don’t have the funds or heroes to spare to train them any better and half of them don’t want to be here in the first place.” A muted snore comes from the table and Puffy sends a quick glance at George who’s sleeping on the table, head resting on crossed arms, before clearing her throat and continuing. “If anyone has any ideas they would be greatly appreciated.” No one makes a move for a long while until there’s a light tap on the table that draws Puffy’s attention to Callahan who starts signing.

*“I can put in more hours for training.”*

Puffy nods and makes a note of it. There wasn’t much else they could do but even so she didn’t expect anyone else to put in more hours for training. Everyone was already supremely overworked, the senior heroes like her and Phil shouldering the most to help out the younger and newer heroes, and with the paycheck cuts most couldn’t afford more hours, some even getting second jobs to help with expenses. Phil alone was putting in enough overtime that he too is having to deal with back to back all nighters with only an hour or two caught here and there. Even so she knew he’d do more if it were possible. She’d have to force him to take a day off some time soon, him and the boys. They need a day to rest and spend time together.

“Onto the next order of business,” Puffy segway’s. “The warehouse case.”

“How many did the guy get this time?” Conner asks.

“Seven.” There’s a murmur through the room. “Techno?”

“Techno clears his throat. “The scene was overall very similar to the last warehouse murder minus the bodies with darker blood. All were placed with a time of death only a little before Siren arrived, very recent, within an hour or two. As Puffy already stated, there were seven in the warehouse, but there was also one more found in an alley we have reason to believe are connected. Blood samples were collected from both scenes and sent to the lab for analysis.”

“Which I have now,” Sam continues and opens the folder in front of him. “We matched the blood samples to that of the victims in the warehouse which left two spare samples. Both were tested against blood found in the nearby alley murder and were found to match, one to the victim and one that we assume to be the killer. We tested the samples against samples taken from the blood found in two other alleyways and both came up as a match to the

assumed suspects. While we had access to the killer's blood we also tested it against the alley murder from a few weeks ago that we thought could possibly be connected and while there wasn't much there was enough to confirm that they are very likely a match."

Conner whistles, "That confirms the guy for, what, almost thirty victims?"

"Yeah, something like that," Wilbur confirms with a nod.

"Siren confirmed that our suspect was not carrying a weapon so when the police searched for witnesses they were told to keep an eye out for an axe or sword hidden or dumped in the area. No such weapon has been found," Techno relays.

"*Were any witnesses found?*" Callahan asks with a soft knock on the counter.

"One," Niki responds. "She was walking home with her groceries and ran into him."

"It had to be past midnight," Jack says. "Why the hell was she getting groceries so late?"

"She had the night shift," Wilbur says. "It's not that unusual to get groceries that late when you've been working the rest of the night." Puffy could tell he was speaking from experience. She holds down her humor at the thought of Siren standing in line to buy some groceries dead on his feet in full costume. It's not the time for that.

"What did she say?" Sam prods, turning the conversation back on track.

"Said he was carrying an axe," Techno says.

"So we know he had the weapon then," Sam says. "What time did she place this at?"

"Around two-thirty give or take," Techno answers. "She also said he was covered in blood and that he was humming something."

"So this was after the murders then," Phil mutters, looking down with his hand on his chin as he thinks.

"What was he humming?" Sam asks.

"She was unable to place the song," Wilbur answers. "She did hum what she could remember, but it was nothing I'd heard before." Wilbur hadn't ever heard it before? Maybe it's a personal song? Like a lullaby or an original song? Something like that?

"Anything else?" she asks and Techno shrugs.

"That's all we've got I believe," Niki answers, Sapnap nodding along.

"Okay then," Puffy says. "That's the end of this week's meeting, dismissed."

"Wait!" Sapnap shirks back as if just as surprised at the sudden outburst, looking sheepish as everyone turns to look at him. "Sorry, there was something I wanted to add. Unrelated to the case."

“The floor is yours,” Puffy says and gestures for him to speak as everyone resettles into their seats.

“This won’t take long,” he says. “I just wanted to know if anyone’s had contact with Skeppy or my dad recently. I haven’t heard back from them in a while.”

“I’m sorry, but I haven’t heard anything, but I’m sure they’re alright,” Niki assures him. “You know how they are.”

“Yeah, they’re always going off on some adventure or other,” Wilbur joins in. “I’m sure they just got caught up exploring some ruins or something.”

It’s true, Skeppy and Bad tended to forget phones were a thing and drop off the face of the earth, no contact, for weeks at a time. That’s just something she’s gotten used to from her old mentor though Bad is usually good with texting everyone updates once in a while, a quick ‘we’re alright’ here or an ‘we’ll be back soon’ there, but so far she hasn’t gotten anything.

“I haven’t heard from them,” Sam says. “They were supposed to bring a new Netherite delivery a few days ago, but they didn’t show up.” They didn’t show up? She couldn’t remember a single time they’ve ever forgotten a delivery before. They’re horrible with communication and timing for everyone but those deliveries. They were their version of a get together, an excuse to take a break for a while and hang out with everyone at the tower for a couple days before heading off again.

“Well that’s concerning,” Jack mutters.

“If anyone hears anything please let me know,” Sapnap says. “I’m worried.”

Puffy nods, “Of course. Everyone, keep an eye out. If you see either of them, remind them to check in a little more often or of the date. For all we know they just lost track of time. Dismissed.” She got a few chuckles when she told them to just tell Bad and Skeppy the date when they found them and everyone slowly filed out of the room. As much as she tried to make light of the situation she really was worried about her mentor and his friend. Bad was the previous leader of the Hero Tower and bestowed the rank onto her when he retired, deciding a life of peace and travel was what he wanted from then on.

She pushed aside any worries of foul play and started packing up her files. There’s no need to worry, they’ve been off the radar for longer than this before and probably just lost track of time. She’s sure they’ll turn up soon.

She pushes aside the voice that tells her they’re not coming back.

## Chapter End Notes

Bonus:

Siren: Wait go back a sec, you ran someone over?

Tommy: \*Cackles in running Dream over in a minecart.\*

# Chapter Twenty-Two

## Chapter Summary

Wilbur gets coffee, Jester stabs someone, and Tommy makes a deal.

## Chapter Notes

Tw's:  
violence and death

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wilbur chats with Sapnap for a bit before he leaves the meeting, mind wandering to the mystery of Bad and Skeppy as he walks but not overly worried, and takes the public elevator back down to the ground floor. He had a bit of time to get to the cafe before Tommy would get there, why meetings were always so early he had no idea, so he didn't mind squeezing through the crowds a bit.

"What a treat," someone says and Wilbur tunes back into what's happening around him to see a tour guide leading around a group of grade schoolers. "This here is Wilbur Watson, he's Siren's personal secretary."

"Woah," the kids gush and start chattering over each other, questions lost beneath the din.

"Okay, okay, one at a time," Wilbur chuckles, motioning for the kids to quiet down. Wilbur points to a little kid waving his hand around in the air, arm moving faster than he thought possible.

"What is he like! He's so cool, but I never see his fights," the kid pouts.

"That's because he works at night," Wilbur tells them. "He is pretty cool though. Really tall too."

"Has he ever used his power on you?" another kid calls out.

"He hasn't," Wilbur says. "Heroes don't use their powers on people unless it's to help save them or others."

"Have you ever fought a bad guy!"

“I haven’t,” Wilbur laughs. “I’m just the guy who takes notes in meetings.” The kids try to ask more questions, but the tour guide talks over them.

“Sorry kids, but we need to let Mr Watson get back to work now.” The kids start to complain but the guide must be used to placating excited kids on tours as she easily diverts their attention. “Our next stop is the museum where you’ll get to see the weapons and suits from past heroes including Influence and Metamorphose!” The kids cheer and Wilbur waves as the guide leads the excited kids away.

Wilbur chuckles to himself as he leaves the building and starts towards the cafe. The secretary thing was actually a pretty good idea. Back when it was first suggested most of them thought it was stupid but it actually worked out really well. Telling people they were the heroes’ secretaries was great for explaining why they were seen in the exclusively heroes meeting room and was the perfect cover for their identities. Sure, it was a little risky, it could paint them as ‘easy’ targets for kidnappers or others trying to get a one up on the Tower, but it’s been made clear that all the heroes secretary’s are trained in self defense to the point of being able to hold their own in a fight against trained professionals. Personally, he’s never had anyone target him as Siren’s secretary, but he knows Quackity, Conner and Jack at the very least have had to deal with it at some point.

There is also the matter of them looking largely similar to their hero counterparts, something thankfully no one has questions thus far, but there’s enough distinction that no one thinks twice about it.

“Wilbur,” Niki greets.

“Niki,” Wilbur responds.

“Tommy’s not here yet,” Niki says.

“Maybe I just wanted to visit you, is that not allowed?”

“Course not,” she smiles. “But I think you’re just early because you didn’t waste enough time before coming over.”

“You got me,” Wilbur says, hands going up by his head. “So, what kind of coffee will that get me?” Niki is not above giving him less caffeine to get back at him. There was one time she was mad enough that she refused to give him any caffeine, at all, serving him decaf when he eventually got her to give him coffee. He never wants to relive that nightmare.

“One shot of espresso.”

“Niki,” Wilbur whines. “Why are you so mean to me?”

“You’re the one who lied about wanting to visit,” she counters.

“I can come visit you on L’Manburg Independence Day to make it up to you?” Wilbur offers.

“Can’t. I’m going to Puffy’s.”

“Dangit,” Wilbur huffs. “When else am I supposed to visit you?”

“Literally any other time,” she laughs.

“Fine, I’ll come over early tomorrow just to visit you,” Wilbur declares.

“I’ll hold you to that.”

“Hold him to what?”

“Tommy! How are you?” Wilbur greets loudly.

“I’m holding him to a visit,” Niki responds to Tommy, the teen completely ignoring Wilbur’s greeting. “He never comes over just to hang out anymore.”

“I’ve been busy,” Wilbur defends weakly.

“So have I, but I still make time for my friends,” Niki pokes playfully.

“Yeah Wilbur, that’s no excuse,” Tommy nods, taking Niki’s side. “I take time out of my day to visit you every single day. If I can do that with my busy, busy work schedule then you should be able to do it easily Mr I pretend to have a job when really I just live at home like a *loser*.”

“I have a job,” Wilbur laughs. “Seriously, I do.”

“I think he’s in denial,” Tommy says to Niki, shaking his head sadly.

“*Tommy*,” Wilbur whines.

“Me too,” Niki agrees.

“*Niki*.”

“You poor, poor man,” Tommy says solemnly, shaking his head slowly. “I feel like I should help him, but I don’t want to.”

“Wow, thanks for not helping with my job I don’t have,” Wilbur deadpans.

“You are very welcome,” Tommy nods. “Losers aside, Niki, I would like a pastry please.”

“What would you like?”

“Surprise me,” Tommy answers. “But make sure there’s whipped cream on it please.”

“Of course,” she responds and starts gathering his order. Wilbur and Tommy stand in silence for a short while, Tommy staring off into space, eyebrows scrunched together. Every few seconds he’d blink a few times and look around a bit before falling back into his head.

“So, how are things?” Wilbur asks, breaking the silence.

“Fine,” Tommy responds.

“You sure? You look a little out of it?” Wilbur pushes. Tommy blinks and turns back to him. “You keep zoning out.”

“I’m thinking,” Tommy responds.

“That’s new,” Wilbur jokes, laughing, but Tommy doesn’t join in. “Is it that new killer? Are you worried?” He offered Tommy a safe place before but maybe he should offer again? Just to make sure he knows it’s okay, but he doesn’t want to push it too much. He already said he wasn’t willing to stay at his house, so he’d probably just get upset if he brought it up again. Maybe he’ll wait a little longer then he’ll bring it up again.

“That’s not it,” Tommy responds. “Well, sort of, but not entirely.”

“Do you...” Wilbur trails off, unsure if he should continue, but decides there’s little to lose from asking. “Do you want to talk about it?”

“Is’ nothing,” Tommy responds letting out a heavy breath, shaking his head. “Family stuff.”

“Is something wrong?”

“No,” Tommy answers shortly. “How’s work?” That was an obvious change in subject and he was about to press more, hopefully without stepping too far out of line, since it was obviously bothering him, but Niki stops him in his tracks as she returns with an apple danish piled high with whipped cream. That’s good, Tommy likes apples.

“An apple danish and hot chocolate,” Niki says and sets them on the counter and Tommy grabs a handful of change from his pocket that he puts on the counter. He’s not sure if Tommy knows about Niki’s power or not, but he’s sure Niki’s grateful for the buffer. He should bring her another pair of gloves, it’s been a while since she replaced her old ones. He and the others take turns wearing a pair of gloves while in a good mood which they then give to her to cycle through when the pair she’s wearing takes on too many emotions. No one’s been able to bring her a new pair in a while and she hasn’t been wearing them as much even though it’s obvious she needs them.

“Thanks,” Tommy says and grabs the food, wandering away back to his table.

“Is he alright?” Niki asks.

“Said there’s some family trouble,” Wilbur responds. “He wouldn’t tell me what.”

Niki nods, “It’s his business then. If he doesn’t want to talk about it then don’t push him.”

“I’m hurt you think I would.”

“Sure Wilbur, we all know you forget how far is too far from time to time,” Niki says.

“Name one time,” Wilbur demands, humoring her.



“That time with Bad.”

“I wanted to know why he hated cursing.”

“Then there was that time with Techno.”

“I didn’t know they were bothering him so much that day!”

“Then that time with George-”

“We swore never to bring that up.”

“You swore, I never promised anything,” Niki counters. “Is that enough proof for you?”

“Yeah, yeah, I push too much, I get it,” Wilbur huffs. “But I won’t this time. I’ve learned when to notice when people are upset and not push anymore.”

“Let’s hope so,” Niki says. “Two shots?” Yes! Two shots of espresso! Thank you Niki!

“Yeah,” Wilbur responds calmly despite his inner excitement at the prospect of more caffeine and Niki starts making his coffee. “You don’t think he needs help, do you?”

“I think he definitely needs help,” Niki responds, pouring the first shot of espresso into a cup before starting another. “But I don’t think he’d accept it.”

“Me neither,” Wilbur mutters. Wilbur sighs and runs his hand through his hair. He feels like he’s being pulled in twelve directions at once. The alley murder he thought would never get solved turned out to be the first kill of a new serial killer, he’s spending longer and longer patrolling and his pay’s been docked nearly in half which while not a pressing concern for him, heroes are paid quite decently, he knows it’s more pressing for lower ranked heroes like Thunderstruck or PantsEater or Morph even. On top of that he’s worried about Tommy’s safety and mental state, he can tell Tommy’s struggling, but there’s no way for him to help and even if there was he knew there was no way Tommy would ever accept his assistance, he’s not that type of person.

“Here.” Wilbur snaps out of his trance and looks to see Niki holding out a cup with a soft look on her face. “I know you’re worried and stressed,” she says and carefully sets the coffee on the counter when he doesn’t reach for it. “But you need to take care of yourself too, alright? Take off L’Manburg Independence Day and forget about things for a while.”

“I don’t know-”

“That wasn’t a request,” Niki says and grabs his hand, putting a pastry he didn’t see her grab into it. “You can’t wear yourself out so much. If I need to take care of myself then so do you.”

Wilbur sighs, a small fond smile on his face, and takes the pastry and coffee. “Thanks Niki. I’ll keep that in mind.”

“Good, now go hang out with Tommy. He looks like he could use some cheering up,” Niki says and gives him a light push in Tommy’s direction. Wilbur chuckles and starts over with a quick wave behind him to Niki. Wilbur slides into the seat across from Tommy and lightly sets his coffee just within reaching distance of Tommy in case he decided he wanted it. He doesn’t mind if Tommy takes it if it means he cheers up a bit. “Hey.”

“Hey,” Tommy mutters, looking at his barely eaten pastry as he chews on the nail of his pointer finger. In his distraction his sleeve had slipped down his wrist showing off a plethora of pale, raised skin. Scar after scar layered one over the other, some small, some large, some old and some more recent. He can tell what he can see is only a fraction of them, many continuing past the line of his sleeve. The thought of Tommy having to go through whatever it was that gave him that many scars makes him want to cry for him and smash something at the same time, preferably his fist into the face of whoever’s fault they are.

“How’s Clementine?” Clementine’s always a safe topic. Perfect for starting a conversation.

“Alright,” Tommy says. “She’s been meeting with her friend more recently.”

“That’s good,” Wilbur says. “Have you been working on anything new recently?”

He half shrugs, still chewing on his nail and staring near-blankly at his pastry. “Not really, finished the dress though.”

“That’s cool, did they come get it yet? How did they react?” Wilbur keeps asking questions about Tommy’s work, easy questions he knows Tommy would never hesitate to answer, and slowly Tommy starts to turn his focus from his pastry to him and his hand disappears under the table. Wilbur’s smile turned less worried as the teen started loosening up, the stress visibly leaving him. Now if only he’d take him up on his offer to stay with him for a bit. Only until that killer is dealt with of course.

“Cows are the best,” Tommy says, continuing his rant on his favorite animal, something that seemed to really lift his mood when he brought them up. “Henry was the best though. He was a good cow.”

“Henry?”

“Oh, I’ve never told you about him have I? He was my friend way back when. He was the best cow I could have ever asked to meet.”

“I didn’t know you had a pet cow.”

“Pet! No, no, no, Henry was not a *pet*, he was my bestest friend,” Tommy denies. “Him and Tub...” Tommy trails off and he seems to deflate as his smile drops. His eyes gloss over, traveling far away from the present, and he starts picking at the skin around his nails. A few seconds pass and he lightly shakes his head, looking towards him, but Wilbur couldn’t tell if Tommy could really see him or not, his eyes still somewhere between here and wherever his mind had gone. “What were we talking about again?”

“Henry,” Wilbur reminds lightly, pushing his voice towards humor in an attempt to dispel the somber atmosphere. “Your bestest friend the cow.”

“Oh yeah,” Tommy hums. “Henry was a good one.” He laughs lightly, but Wilbur could tell his heart wasn’t in it. “Sorry, me heads on wrong today.”

“That’s alright. We all have our off days.”

Tommy sighs, shaking his head slowly then looks up at the clock. “I should get going. I’ve got some stuff to do.”

“Alright, see you tomorrow?” He doesn’t know why but it came out as a question instead of the statement it usually was. He knows he’ll come back, he always does, but he’s worried. Yeah, that’s why. He just wants to make sure.

“Yeah, see ya later bug dubs.” Tommy then picks up his half eaten pastry and hot chocolate and walks out of the cafe, his side of the table as spotless as always despite his distracted departure.

Wilbur continues to sit at the table for a bit, nursing his long cold cup of coffee, before sighing and peeling himself out of the seat, still full pastry bag in hand. He deposits his, now empty, cup in the trash and raises a hand in farewell to Niki as he passes by. He should get some sleep. He can feel his eyes pulling closed further and further with every step despite the caffeine now in his system. Sometimes you’re just too tired for caffeine to help and exhaustion wins anyway. He should take Niki’s advice and take off L’Manburg Independence day. It’s still a bit away, but it’ll be something to look forward to amongst the endless hours of work. Yeah, that sounds like a good idea. He’ll do that.

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Jester’s hair tousles wildly in the wind as he jumps from roof to roof before ducking behind an air conditioning unit as he sneers at a hero passing by a few roofs away. He’s never been much a fan of going out in costume, but sometimes it’s necessary. Now is one of those times. Not because he needs information or to scare some arrogant new gang into submission and put them back in their place. No, this time he’s pissed and he needs something to destroy. Lucky for him he has the perfect target.

His sneer turns into a grin as he steps out from behind the ac unit, taking his metal edged throwing cards from his pocket and creating a fan of deadly projectiles ready for use. The light reflecting off the cards draws the heroes attention and they stop leaping across rooftops and turn towards him. They’re too far away for him to see their face but he can practically feel the grin on their face. From what he can tell the hero is one of the new recruits, one of the ones who joined thinking they’d get riches and fame without ever having to do any work. They think being a hero is nothing but beating up low level criminals and looking cool. His favorite type to crush.

Perfect timing, he’s been looking for an outlet for his frustrations. The last time he went out seeking a fight Blob, or should he say Dream, got his skill cracked and while that wasn’t his intention he’s not all that torn up about it.

The hero starts in his direction and Jester prepares for a fight. It better be good, if the fight's over too quickly he might just get more annoyed. He's trying to get out his frustration over not finding any information on that brat, he's not in the mood for a shit fight.

"Jester," the hero drawls once in hearing range. "In the mood for a beatdown?"

"Sure," Jester responds. "You don't mind a few broken bones, do you?"

"We'll see who has broken bones," he sneers and jumps forward, hand slashing down, fire erupting from his palm in Jester's direction. Jester easily dodges and sneers in kind. Of course it's that new fire brat. He'll have to apologize to Sap later, he was thinking about training him. Not that he would've done it, the guy's personality is intolerable

Jester flings a few cards in the brats direction and he doesn't bother dodging, sending a wave of near white fire to burn the cards, melted metal dripping onto the roof, sizzling against the asphalt. Idiot. He must've seen Flare do that in one of their staged fights. Few can get their fire hot enough to melt metal, let alone keep using their power at that level afterward. Not to mention how temperamental flames can be, the hotter they are the more unruly they become. Sappap spent years training to control the temperature of his flames before even attempting something like that around others, let alone in a fight. Had there been people around he could have seriously hurt someone. Another point to him being a shit hero.

Jester bares his teeth and rolls out of the way of another wave of near white flames. At this rate he's going to burn himself out before the fight really begins. What a waste. Jester throws another handful of cards, a second flying right afterward, and bends his luck ever so slightly so they fly true, past the hottest point in the flame wall, and hit their intended target. The first set of cards take the brunt of the impact, few making it through the flames, but the second hits its mark, slicing through the hero. There's a grunt as the fire fizzles out to show a bloodied new recruit, a poor excuse of a hero really, hunched over with his uninjured arm holding the other as it hangs at his side, slices torn through his upper shoulder and arm.

"You piece of shit," he growls.

"What? More than you bargained for?" Jester taunts and stands up straighter, head tilted to look down at the hero. "Thought you'd be the one to *finally* take me down? Finish what the Blade couldn't?"

"Try wouldn't," the false hero sneers. "Everyone knows something was holding him back, but there's nothing holding me back from killing you right where you stand," he spits.

"Oh really?" Jester's eyes drop visibly to his now useless arm, the hero only getting angrier at the motion. "You're not the least bit curious about *why* he didn't finish me off?"

"Not in the slightest," he snarls and lunges forward, flames following his every move. He has to be getting very tired at this point. Element users can rarely use their element far from their person for long. It's like he's trying to exhaust himself. It's his own fault for thinking he could win.

Jester dodges to the side, but his drawback takes that moment to come into play and the flames graze his arm. The burning is familiar as it crawls its way up his arm, fresh burns layering over decade old scared over ones. He *hates* fire, almost as much as he hates the Blade. Ever since that day all those years ago when he finally realized that heroes aren't all they're cracked up to be.

Jester lets his anger flow through him and throws one card after another until the hero is forced to his knees with cards sticking out of him like a pincushion. Jester starts walking forward and the hero tries to send another wave of fire at him, but a pitiful stream is all that rises to his aid, nothing more than smoke with a couple flickering sparks at this point. Jester morphs the skin of his uninjured arm into tough scales, something he's learned over the years of training with Sapnap, and easily bats away the couple of sparks that make it a touch too close. He stops in front of the downed hero and kneels down in front of him, smirk plain to see. He's never bothered with wearing a mask, not when he can just change his face as he wishes whenever he needs to. Shapeshifting is such a useful trick when you're a double agent.

"Still confident you'll win?" Jester asks, laughter on his lips. The hero continues to glare at him, but he could see the fear in his eyes. The fear of a man looking death in the eyes. Jester grins, hands gripping the sides of his face to look further into the fearful eyes. "No, you're not. You've given up, haven't you *hero*?"

"I'll never give up," he spits, blood dripping from the corner of his mouth.

"Well," Jester drawls, standing back up and letting his hands fall from the hero's face. "Let's see how long that lasts, shall we?" The hero didn't bother hiding his fear, the smug superiority long gone, as Jester pulls out a card he reserves solely for the end of a battle, holding it before his victim showing off the image, his sharp teeth bared in a malicious grin.

The sharpened Joker card reflects in his victims eyes and then it falls to a scream that makes his ears *sing*.

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He's worried about them.

It's not that he wasn't worried before, he doesn't think he's ever *not* worried about them, but the thought had run circles around his mind the entire day without pause and once he got home he'd thrown himself onto his couch and stared at the ceiling. That thought in his mind he lets his eyes fall to the statue Drista had gifted him of herself. He's worried that her, Kristen, and XD haven't regained their strength yet and thinking about his family only turned his thoughts back to another member of his family, to Shroud. Is he happy? Is he safe? Is this world's version of him okay? He couldn't escape his worries even when he was hanging out with Wilbur at the cafe. He finally started to snap out of his worries for a bit, he even started talking about Henry, but then he almost brought up Tubbo and suddenly he wasn't talking to Wilbur of the Esempii, he was talking to *his* Wilbur, his brother.

He couldn't bring himself to stay much longer after that. He felt bad for bringing Will down with him, he's got enough to worry about with how stressed he always seems to look lately,

but he couldn't help it. The last thing he wants is to be a bother to him, but it seems that being a bother is all he's good at. No, he has to stop thinking that way. Remember what Puffy said. When you start doubting yourself start thinking about something else to lift yourself back up.

"I'm good at sewing," he mutters to himself as he walks, having peeled himself off his couch at some point though he doesn't really remember when. "Wilbur and Niki are my friends. I'm not a bother to them. I'm fixing things with Fundy." He lets out a breath, hands buried in his pockets for warmth, and a slight smile comes to his face. That's better.

Tommy passes by Tubburger and looks anywhere but the restaurant itself. Going with Fundy the other day wasn't bad, thankfully Tubbo wasn't working, but it wasn't the best experience ever. Hanging out with Fund was great, it's been too long since he'd hung out with his nephew like that, but being in Tubburger was odd without Tubbo, real Tubbo not the fake one from this world.

He still felt bad from tricking him. He had to keep reminding himself that it wasn't manipulative, just a little white lie. No harm no foul! So what if there wasn't actually another friend and he was just looking for an excuse? It's not that big of a deal, nobody was hurt in the end. The dark part of his mind continues to whisper that it *is* bad and that he's just like Dream, wrapping people in strings and dragging them around as he pleases and just like every other time he hears that little voice start whisper he shuts it down before the thoughts could truly form.

He's nothing like Dream and he never will be.

He takes another deep breath in and slowly lets it out as he approaches the entrance gates to Las Nevadas. If he's in the area he might as well get some stuff done and he's been meaning to stop by Las Nevadas for a bit. He steps through the gate, no one stopping him, and takes another deep breath. He can contact Drista later, he did promise after all and he'll ask about Shroud then finish off that pasty from earlier he never got around to eating. Maybe he'll even watch a movie or two on the roof. He wouldn't mind a visit from Siren either. Yeah, that sounds like a plan, he'll do that.

"Tommy Innit from..." Slimecicle happily greets as he emerges from a wall and solidifies into a human form draped in slime, trailing off as usual when it gets to the place part of his title.

"Charlie Slimecicle from Las Nevadas," Tommy responds. He's glad Slime only ever calls him Tommy Innit. He'd lose it if he had to hear him repeat his full name every time they saw each other. If he even knows it, which he probably does. Slime knows everything, something he's sure is true here just as it was back on the Smp.

"Are you here to see Jester Tommy Innit?" Slime asks.

"Yeah," he responds. "You can say L'Manburg you know. For my title I mean," Tommy says as he follows Slime through the streets of Las Nevadas, the hybrid walking with a bounce in his step. He looked like an old person on the street at the moment, if a random person was covered in random chunks of slime that is. "That *is where I live.*"

*“That does not feel right Tommy Innit from....somewhere. I will only call you by the right title.”*

*Tommy sighs, but can't hold back a smile. “Sure thing. Let me know when you find out.” He's just as curious to know where he's from in the slime's eyes. Will it be Manburg? Or Pogtopia? Or maybe the Cottage where he grew up? Or even the Void where his mother resides with her fellow gods? He kind of hopes he starts calling him Tommy Innit from the dirt or something after his dirt hut he built. Now that place was nice, one of his favorite homes he's ever built. The only one he built, but still the best.*

*“I will Tommy Innit from...” Slime pushes open the giant set of double doors to Jester's office. “We're here!” Inside the office is another Slime and Jester with a bandaged arm, his button down's sleeve rolled up past his elbow to keep it out of the way. The second Slime sets the last bandage in place and rushes over to the Slime that led him to the room and grabs his hand, the two melting back into one as Jester tests out his arm. There is a not small amount of blood on his shirt and he doubts it's from him. Not all of it at least.*

*“Tommy Innit,” Jester greets in his usual high and mighty drawl. “To what do I owe the pleasure?” He gestures his hand towards the chair in front of the desk, the uninjured one, and Tommy drops himself into it.*

*“You trip or something?” Tommy asks, jerking his head towards Jester's arm.*

*“Something like that,” he responds, one arm raising in a shrug. “Wrong place wrong time, you get what I mean?”*

*“Ah.” So he killed someone because he was pissed about something. Good to know. At least that means he's most likely in a good mood.*

*“So, what can I help you with?”*

*“I have a deal for you.”*

*“Do tell.” Jester leans forward and interlaces his fingers on the desk in front of him.*

*“I want a bow.”*

*“A bow?” he repeats, a single eyebrow raising at the request. Well, he's guessing he's only raising one. It's hard to tell through all the scar tissue.*

*“A bow,” Tommy repeats. “And a quiver of arrows.”*

*“And what will I get out of this?” Jester responds.*

*“Two specific questions,” Tommy says. “One for the bow and one for the quiver of arrows. You'll get one additional question for every additional quiver of arrows I ask for.”*

*“When you say specific...?”*

*"I mean you can't ask a general question. Say, if you want to know about my scars you have to ask about one specifically. Something like that."*

*"I can do that." Jester nods after a moment of consideration. "One bow and a quiver of arrows for two questions." Tommy nods and Jester reaches out his hand. Tommy shakes it sealing the deal, pulling his hand back slowly to hide the slight pain creeping through his hand. While he'd much rather make his own bow he's not too sure how to get his hands on the materials. This will have to do until he can figure it out.*

*"They better be good quality," Tommy adds, sending a suspicious look at the avian.*

*"Only the highest," he responds and Tommy has no choice but to trust him. He'll test them thoroughly before ever using them.*

*"Good," Tommy nods.*

*"Do I get to ask my questions now or must I wait?"*

*"One now, one when I get what I want."*

*"Fair." Jester goes silent, thinking over a question to ask then smiles, without his teeth. "You gave me a good idea. I'd like to know about your scars."*

*Tommy hums, "You have to ask about one specifically."*

*"How about that one on your face right there," Jester responds and gestures to the jagged scar cutting through the outer edge of his right eyebrow to his cheekbone just missing his eye. He just had to use his scars as an example. "I'd love to know how you got it." It wasn't his worst scar, far from it, but it was one of the few he couldn't hide. He resists the urge to run his finger over it and maintains eye contact as he responds.*

*"I got it from a very bad person," Tommy responds slowly, calculating the best way to word his answer without revealing too much. "We were both angry and, unfortunately, I didn't come out on top of this particular fight."*

*"I'm sure you can give me more than that," Jester chides when he doesn't continue.*

*"There isn't much else to say."*

*"Sure there is. What type of weapon it was or maybe where you were," Jester suggests casually, though Tommy could see the curiosity taking over his eyes.*

*"It was a punch," he half-lies. There's no way in hell he's telling him it's from being punched by a raw fucking potato. "He punched me and that's all you're getting."*

*"Aw, really?"*

*"Yes. That's my end of the deal, now follow through with yours."*



*“Alright, alright, I hear you,” Jester responds, hands raised half heartedly with his palms facing away from himself. “I’ll need a few days to get things together you know.”*

*“Sure.” He knows he could get it done in an hour if he wanted to, but he’s not in a rush. He had a week last time before another bout of assassins came after him, he should have at least some time before the next one. “Until then I’m sure you know where I am.” He stands, hands in his pockets.*

*“Of course,” Jester responds. “I’ll have Charlie let you know.”*

*“See you then,” Tommy responds with a nod and turns away from Jester and towards the door. He doesn’t bother looking over his shoulder at him as he walks away, a past of trust too easy to overrule with the same but not person, and exits the room. It doesn’t take him long to make his way to the bottom floor of the building and out the front door. He spotted the now familiar orange blur that seems to inhabit the building a few times, but he’s no closer to actually finding out what it’s from, not that he’s really been looking. He doesn’t see much of a point to.*

*Slime pops his head out from a wall or part of the floor here and there as he leaves, watching him at Jester’s behest, and doesn’t disappear completely until he’s out of Las Nevadas’ borders completely. He turns his eyes away from Tubburger as he passes, heart mourning the loss of his brother, and continues on his way until he’s back home and already climbing up to the roof in hopes of a visit from Siren. He really does love having a friend he didn’t know back on the Smp. It makes him feel like he really can leave all the bad stuff in the past and move on even if he is still surrounded by the people from said past even though they’re all different from how they were.*

*He leans back and relaxes into the rooftop, eyes staring up into the stars. With an easy motion he opens up his inventory, the floating screen briefly popping up as he grabs his unfinished pastry and takes a bite, humming at the flavor. And there he rests, worries pushed aside for a short while as he lets himself become one with the wind and sky and earth. He focuses on the peace nature brings him and draws it close, basking in its beauty as he stares up at the stars. He’s always loved nature, the peace it can bring giving him something to hold onto when things are at their darkest and he uses it now to hold back the sea of worries for just a little bit longer.*

*He’ll message Drista soon and he’ll find out how they’re doing and how Shroud is doing and all that, but for now he’s just going to close his eyes for a bit. Not sleep, he couldn’t sleep on the roof even if he wanted to, but closing his eyes sounds nice. And just like that his eyes drifted shut and his heart beat in time with the earth around him and he relaxed.*

## Chapter End Notes

I went to post this a couple days ago then realized I’d left over half of it unedited so...anyway, new chapter!

Fun Fact:

Oak trees are struck by lightning more than any other tree.

The average strawberry has 200 seeds.

Cranberries have air pockets that let them bounce and float in water.

Minor edits made: 10/7/23

# Chapter Twenty-Three

## Chapter Summary

Tommy goes to work, Wilbur goes to lunch, and Tubbo gets angry.

## Chapter Notes

TWs:

None I'm pretty sure

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Siren didn't show up. It's not like he's obligated to visit him every night, but he was still just a little disappointed he didn't, not that he'd ever tell him that. He was probably busy, he is a hero after all and he does have a job to do, so it makes sense. That doesn't stop him from pouting, *sulking* he doesn't *pout*, enough that Clementine apparently noticed.

"What's wrong dear?" she asks, placing down some fabric on the table next to him. "You've been down all morning."

"It's nothing," Tommy shrugs. "I was hoping to see one of my friends yesterday, but he didn't show up."

"I'm sorry about that," she apologizes. "I know I'm always disappointed when a friend bails on plans."

"It's fine," he dismisses. "It's not like it was a planned visit or anything. We just have a place we meet up when we're free. He was busy I guess."

"Well, I'm sure you'll see him again soon," she says. "If he really is your friend then he won't stay away long."

"Yeah, he won't stay away long," Tommy agrees with a nod, eyes focused back on the needle in his hand. "He's got a demanding job, but he always makes time for me."

Not that he'd ever tell anyone but Siren is probably one of his favorite people in the Esempii, along with Clementine of course. He thinks it's because he didn't know them back on the Smp. Sure, Siren's similar to Wilbur in a few ways, but they can't be the same person. He knows Wilbur and he doesn't show any hybrid features while Siren is an obvious phantom hybrid, there's no possible way to hide *glowing eyes* all the time so there's no way they're the

same person. The fact that there's no history between them outside of in this world makes it easier to know him and he likes it. It's a new start to things, it makes him think there's hope in leaving behind his past and pain for a better future, that he doesn't have to rely on his past relationships and memories to get by, that maybe he can make a life for himself away from his past.

It feels silly to put so much hope on a single friend he made less than a month ago, but he can't help it! He's glad he's friends with Siren. While he may not be the biggest fan of heroes he doesn't have any bad memories tied to him from a shitty past of wars and explosions and exiles and that's enough for him to want to hold onto their friendship.

Tommy works diligently while Clementine fiddles around with her radio. They don't turn it on often, but once in a while it's nice to listen to. He's found he quite likes this world's music, some of it at least. Clementine usually plays 'classical' music and it's pretty calming which is probably why he likes it so much. The radio crackles and hisses out static and after another moment words start to rise out of the small box.

"This morning," come the crackly, distorted voice of the reporter, "a new hero recruit by the name of Incite was found dead on a roof near the border of Snowchester and Esempii Center. He had been tortured to death and in place of his heart was a Joker playing card that is well known to be Jester's calling card. We are unsure why Incite was targeted or what Jester did with the man's heart but--"

The broadcast cuts off suddenly and Tommy turns his head to see Clementine turning the dials of the radio. "Rubbish," she huffs and the channel changes to soothing 'jazz' music. "There are better things to listen to in the mornings. Those people don't actually care about what happened, they're just happy for something to talk about. Nothing but ratings and money for those people. Never trust that news woman," Clementine rants, wagging around her bony finger. "We used to play cards some years ago and she's a dirty cheat."

"Noted," Tommy snorts. "Don't play cards with the news lady."

"Good, now head off to lunch, you're late as it is."

"Really?" Tommy looks up at the clock. "You're right, guess I'll head out then."

"I'm always right. Now get!" Tommy laughs.

"Sure thing Clem. See you later!"

"See you later dear."

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"Niki!"

"You actually came early," Niki responds. "What a surprise."

"I know," Wilbur says, arms still held out from his grand greeting. "I kept my promise."

“Good, you’re not a complete piece of shit then.”

“Hey, I’ll have you know I’m only a partial piece of shit thank you very much,” Wilbur responds, standing slouched in front of the counter with his hands in his pockets. “Seriously though, sorry I haven’t been coming around to hang out with you so much.”

“I’m just busting your chops Will, I’m not actually upset. We’ve both been busy.” She sighs and focuses a little too much on the spot she’s trying to rub out of the counter with a cloth.

“How are you doing?” Wilbur asks, leaning his arms against the counter. “You’re not overworking yourself?”

“I’m fine,” she sighs. “I’m a little stressed, but honestly who isn’t right now.”

“Tell me about it,” Wilbur huffs. “I ran into so many villains in Upper last night I couldn’t even visit Tommy. I was stuck by the border the entire night.”

“They’re getting bolder.”

“That killer’s gotten away with killing so many people others are thinking they can too.”

“And they can,” Niki says. “Everyone’s so focused on the warehouse killer and stretched so thin there’s a lot slipping through the cracks.” Niki lets out a harsh sigh. “What would you like? The less I think about this stuff the better.”

Wilbur chuckles, “True. How about three shots of espresso?”

Niki gives him a look of utter disappointment while Wilbur makes his most convincing puppy dog eyes and she sighs. “Fine, but just this once! And you better not tell Phil.”

“I won’t, promise!” She rolls her eyes with a smile and turns around to make his coffee. He passes the time until she returns by scrolling through his phone. Everywhere he looked was the news about Incite’s murder. He’s not sure what could have prompted Jester to kill him, but he wouldn’t be surprised if Incite saw him and goaded him into a fight. Jester isn’t the type to seek out a fight, most of the time, but when one is started he’s sure as hell going to be the one to finish it. Incite was new but even newbies were told to leave Jester alone, they do have a deal after all.

Quackity was pissed about what happened, it looked like he was trying to crush his phone when he read the news, and Sapnap had to pull him away for a bit to calm him down. He understands his hatred of Jester, if Jester had killed his family for a debut he would be pissed at him too. It just sucks they aren’t any closer to putting him away.

“Wow, you kept your promise,” Tommy announces, walking over to where Wilbur’s standing. “Congrats on not being a dick.”

“Ha ha, very funny,” Wilbur smiles. “I always keep my promises.”

“Mhm, sure.”

“Really, when have I not kept a promise?”

Tommy shrugs, “I’ll find out eventually.”

“See! I haven’t broken any promises!”

“Yeah, yeah. Now where’s Niki? You haven’t killed her, have you?”

“Why would I kill her?”

“Because I’m her favorite and you’re jealous,” Tommy says with a sure nod.

“Sure I am,” Wilbur scoffs.

“He’s right,” Niki says as she returns. “Tommy’s my favorite.”

“Niki,” Wilbur gasps in false betrayal, hand over his heart. “How could you?”

“Sorry,” she shrugs, hiding a smile. “He’s funnier.”

“Niki, I will never recover from this,” Wilbur says dramatically, taking a step back, his hand flying to his forehead in his betrayal. “I’m wounded beyond saving.”

“Well then I guess you won’t be needing this coffee with three shots of espresso,” Niki sighs sadly. “Tommy, do you want it?”

“Sure, I’ll take it.”

“No! I’m alive! Don’t give away my coffee!” Wilbur rushes to the cup and snatches it, holding it to his chest. “I have been revived by caffeine.” He then gulps down as much as he can without choking.

“Aw, I wanted that,” Tommy pouts.

“Too bad, it’s mine,” Wilbur responds, sticking his tongue out at him.

“Can I have one?” he asks Niki.

“She won’t let you, says three shots of espresso is too much-”

“Sure, if that’s what you want.”

“What!” Wilbur shouts. “Just like that? That’s not fair, how come you let him have three shots so easily?”

“Because his father didn’t come to me to explicitly tell me never to serve him more than two shots of espresso,” she says. His not so borderline caffeine addiction being another reason was left unsaid but heavily implied. “Do you want anything in it?” she asks Tommy.

“Whipped cream,” he answers. “And…vanilla? I guess? I don’t really know.”

“Caramel’s always good,” Wilbur chimes in, definitely not sulking.

“Caramel then,” Tommy says.

“Caramel it is.” Niki leaves to make Tommy’s coffee and Tommy crouches down to look at the pastry’s on the bottom shelf.

“So, Tommy,” Wilbur starts, no longer sulking in favor of happily sipping his highly caffeinated beverage. “What are you doing for L’Manburg Independence Day?”

“L’Manburg Independence Day?”

“Yeah, every year we celebrate when L’Manburg first became a district. We all used to be a part of Esempii Center, though back then it wasn’t the Center District it was just Esempii, but some people didn’t agree with some of their laws at the time so they fought against them.”

“Really? Like with swords and stuff?” Tommy asks, head tilting to the side as he looks up at Wilbur.

“No, there wasn’t any real fighting, it was all protests and stuff,” Wilbur shrugs. “The government eventually decided to just make districts and that’s how L’Manburg was made! From there all the others were made too and that’s why there’s so many places a part of the Esempii. Technically it’s just Independence Day since it’s a celebration of the districts creation in general, but I prefer L’Manburg Independence Day,” he says, smiling. “Gotta represent my home district after all.”

“There’s no other way,” Tommy chuckles. Good, L’Manburg is truly the best and shall get all the recognition it deserves. “Why do you ask?”

“Well, it’s coming up soon and it’s customary to get together with friends and family and just have fun for a bit so I was wondering if you wanted to come over to my place. My family and I are having a party,” Wilbur says nonchalantly while he internally panics.

“Party? Who’ll be there?” There was a look in Tommy’s eyes he couldn’t decipher, something between sad, nervous and excited with something else thrown in he just can’t place.

“No one much, just me, Phil and Techno,” Wilbur responds. “Niki’s going over to Puffy’s place so she won’t be there, but I’m going to try and get some of her pastries for the party. She’s always busy on holidays so it’s not a guarantee. Oh, and feel free to invite someone if you want.”

Tommy’s silent for a minute, but eventually he says, “I’ll think about it. Remind me closer to whenever it is.”

“Sure thing,” Wilbur says, internally cheering at the lack of an outright no.

Niki returns and sets Tommy’s coffee on the counter. “Anything else?”

“Yeah, I’ll try that long sweet berry biscuit thing,” Tommy says and points to the pasty in the case.

“Cranberry biscotti? Sure thing.” She doesn’t take long to return with the pastry and set it on the counter, smiling at the coin tower Tommy’s constructed on the register.

Tommy beams when he sets down the last one and it doesn’t topple over. “I love towers,” he whispers, just barely loud enough for even Wilbur to hear, making him smile at the childish action. “Thanks Niki,” he says at a more normal volume.

Tommy walks over to his table while Wilbur stays behind to talk with Niki some more.

“I asked Tommy if he wanted to come over to my place for L’Manburg Independence Day,” Wilbur says.

“Darn, you beat me to it,” Niki huffs, but he can see her trying not to smile. “What did he say?”

“He said he’d think about it,” Wilbur responds with a shrug. “Better than nothing.”

“Better than nothing,” Niki agrees with a nod. “Now go drink your coffee before it gets cold.”

Wilbur chuckles, “Thanks Niki.”

“You’re welcome,” she responds. “Now shoo! You’re holding up the line.”

“There’s is no-

“Shoo!” Wilbur chuckles as he walks away and sits himself in the booth across from Tommy who’s biscotti is nothing more than crumbs and takes a sip of his coffee.

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He feels like he’s going crazy. He knows that guy is familiar, outside of when he visited Tubburger, but he just can’t place it. If only he could just think past whatever’s stopping him from remembering.

“Tubbo,” Ranboo’s voice cuts into his thoughts. “Are you still trying to remember where you first saw that guy?” Then Ranboo’s whispers a faint, “What was his name again?”

“Yes,” Tubbo groans, throwing himself back onto the couch, neck resting against the arm of rest so he could tilt back his head to see into the kitchen where Ranboo was tidying up. “I just feel like I’ve met him somewhere before.” Then he tacks on a quick, “His name’s Tommy by the way.”

Ranboo nods to himself. “It wasn’t his first time at Tubburger, right? Didn’t you say he was there another time with Wilbur?”



“Yeah, but I mean other than that,” Tubbo insists, the blurry form of a memory hovering just out of his grip. “He’s just so familiar.”

“Maybe you’re not meant to remember? When I forget something I just stop thinking about it,” Ranboo shrugs. “Unless it’s important. Then I would try to remember.”

“This could be!” Tubbo responds, jumping up from where he was laying on the couch and onto his knees, hands braced against the arm rest, looking at where Ranboo was reorganizing the cabinets. The pantry had gotten a complete overhaul the day before so now it was the pots and pans turn. “How would I know if it’s important or not if I don’t remember what it is?”

“Which means it might not be.”

“But it *could* be,” Tubbo pressed. “The memory is right there, but I just can’t reach it. We were on the street, in our vigilante suits, and I think he was there, but I can’t remember what actually happened. It’s almost like that one time Jester introduced me to Punz and...it was him!” Tubbo scrambles off the couch to stand, foot slamming against a nearby side table startling Ranboo enough they almost dropped the pan in their hands.

“What did I miss?” Ranboo questions, obviously confused.

“He fucking Muddled me! You too!”

“I’m officially lost.”

“Punz! His power is Muddle! He can make it hard to remember shit,” Tubbo starts pacing, hands waving around wildly. “He must have used his power on us which is why we don’t remember! I ran into the guy a couple times since which is why I remember now! Or some of it at least. We’re going to see Jester.”

“Now?”

“Yes, now,” Tubbo huffs. “We’re going to find out why he did this. There’s no doubt in my mind he’s the one behind this.” Tubbo grabs Ranboo’s sleeve and starts dragging him to the door.

“Why would he hire Punz to mess with our memories?”

“I don’t know,” Tubbo admits after a moment. “But we’re going to find out.”

“Alright,” Ranboo sighs and allows himself to be dragged away from the half organized cabinets and right out of the apartment.

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“You!” Tubbo shouts, harshly shoving open the doors to Jester’s office, the handles slamming into the walls. Ranboo carefully closes the doors and starts trying to rub out the spots on the walls.

“Me,” Jester responds in that infuriatingly unbothered tone. “And what of me?”

“You Muddled me!” Tubbo shouts.

“That I did,” Jester smirks. “I’m surprised it took you so long to realize.”

Tubbo slams his hands on the desk. “Why?”

“You were suspicious of him,” Jester shrugs. “I couldn’t have that.”

“And why were you so concerned over a civilian?” Tubbo glares. “You’ve never been one to care about the ‘complacent masses’.” Tubbo huffs, making sure to quote Jester’s own words for the civilians of the Esempii. Out of the corner of his eye Tubbo can see that Slime had arrived and was chatting with Ranboo, both trying to get the marks off the wall from the doors hitting them. He ignores them in favor of continuing to glare at Jester and hope that will get him some answers.

“He’s not a part of the complacent masses,” Jester responds, a certain kind of resentment in his tone when he repeats the quote. “He interests me and I couldn’t risk you messing up my plans, especially if you were to arrest him.”

“We wouldn’t arrest him if he hasn’t done anything wrong,” Tubbo responds.

Jester watches him for a moment, head tilted in a distinctly avian way and resting on his interlocked hands, supported by his elbows on his overly ornate desk. “You don’t remember yet.”

Tubbo falters, “Not fully, but I remember most of it!” He’d rather have kept that information closer to his chest for a bit longer, information is best kept to oneself when it comes to Jester, but it’s not like he could have hidden it forever. Jester is aggravatingly observant.

Jester hums, continuing to watch Tubbo as if he could see the memory in his eyes. “When you remember I’d like to know what happened.”

Tubbo scoffs, “Like you don’t already know.”

“I don’t,” Jester responds, making Tubbo blink a few times in shock. It’s not often Jester admits to not knowing something someone else does. Usually he strings them along longer and makes sure he has them right where he wants them before offering a deal, one that leans heavily in his favor. Jester only shrugs. “All I know is that when you saw him he was covered in blood and that made you suspicious. Enough that Tommy noticed and kept an eye out for you. It’s hard to spy on someone when they’re on the lookout for tails.”

“Covered in blood?” Tubbo mutters, hand on his chin as he tries to think back one last time. Then his eyes fly open. He quickly tempers his reaction to be one of shock rather than discovery and hopes Jester either believes it, highly unlikely, or decides to let it be. He remembers it was dark and Tommy’s shirt was torn with fresh blood around it, blood he claimed was his own but Tubbo isn’t sure whether that was to be believed or not. “When you find out, let me know. We don’t really know either.”

“Interesting,” Jester hums, staring at his desk for a moment as he thinks before looking back up at Tubbo. “And you really don’t know why he was walking about covered in blood after dark?”

“Not a clue,” Tubbo responds.

Jester hums again, “Alright. I will let you know.”

“What do you want in return?” He’s not stupid enough to think Jester would ever give him any information for free.

“If you’re going to spy on him, keep it on the down low, more so than usual. I’d rather him not be more suspicious of me than he already is.”

“Done,” Tubbo responds then backs up. “C’mon Boo, let’s get out of here.” Ranboo says a quick farewell to Slime before following after him, Slime waving energetically after them.

“I’ll see you soon!” Jester calls after them as they walk out and Tubbo scowls. He shuts the door, hiding the smug man from view, and stomps his way down the corridor, Ranboo following close behind, hunched over and wringing his fingers.

He may feel grateful to Jester for helping him after his escape but that doesn’t mean he has to like the guy. It wasn’t like he did it out of the kindness of his heart, he was paid. He’s just glad Jester finds his dislike of him amusing, otherwise he’d be more careful to hide it. He may not like him, but even he knows not to piss off someone like him.

“Tubbo,” Ranboo whispers. “He’s here.” Tubbo looks up and just as he does a flash of orange disappears around a corner. Tubbo smiles.

“Fundy!”

Fundy emerges from around the corner and nods his head. “Tubbo.”

“It’s great to see you man,” Tubbo says and throws an arm over Fundy’s shoulders. He wouldn’t call them friends, but Jester only helped him because of Fundy so he wouldn’t call them strangers either. He’s pretty cool actually, but he’s too close to Jester for him to consider befriending him.

“Good to see you too,” Fundy responds. “You’re doing well?”

“I am,” Tubbo responds. “All thanks to you.” Fundy averts his eyes, wringing his hands, and nods. “So, I have a question for you.”

“Okay,” Fundy says slowly.

“That Tommy guy, the one Jester’s obsessed with, where does he work?”

Fundy narrows his eyes, “Why?”

Tubbo shrugs, “He came to Tubburger the other day and he seems cool, wouldn’t mind being friends with the guy, but I don’t know how to find him. So, could you help me out?”

Fundy stares at him, searching his eyes for any sign of bad intentions. Eventually he says, “Fine. He works at Clem’s Couturier. It’s not far from Lower’s border in Upper L’Manburg.”

“Thanks, Fundy,” Tubbo cheers, stepping back to punch him in the shoulder. “You won’t regret it.”

“I better not,” Fundy whispers, but Tubbo pretends he doesn’t hear him.

“We’ll be heading out now,” Tubbo says. “See you around?”

“Yeah, see you around.” Fundy nods then disappears from view in the blink of an eye, no doubt to fulfill some demand or other from his boss.

“His power is so cool,” Ranboo whispers.

“It is,” Tubbo agrees. “I’d still rather teleport.”

“You’re getting there,” Ranboo responds.

Tubbo grins, “I really am. I almost hit the target yesterday!”

“Wanna practice a bit?”

“Definitely! Maybe this time I can teleport into another room,” Tubbo whispers excitedly.

“If you look through a window maybe, but I don’t think you’re ready to go through a wall yet.”

Tubbo shrugs, “Maybe, maybe not. We’ll just have to wait and see.” Tubbo walks with a skip in his step out of Las Nevadas and once they reach an alley he looks up at Ranboo, curse his tallness, and waits. Ranboo sighs and takes his hand, a second later they disappear in a shower of purple sparks and reappear in their apartment.

Time to do some vigilante shit!

## Chapter End Notes

I had planned for another character to meet Tommy next chapter but I ended up pushing it back another chapter. Any guesses who it could be? :)

# Chapter Twenty-Four

## Chapter Summary

Tommy's completely normal day is ruined and Tubbo blows up a truck.

## Chapter Notes

Tw's:

breakdown/panic attack, brief sh, violence, implied experimentation

Edits made on 2/15/24

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Today is a completely normal day. He left his apartment a little after sunrise and arrived at Clem's a few minutes before his shift was set to start. He sat in his usual chair in the back room and mended a few shirts and tried out a new pattern. He even sat with some calming music, a needle, and some fabric and started some embroidery! Nothing but a completely ordinary, unexciting day.

That is all it was supposed to be but Tommy is nothing if not unlucky and that is not how his day went.

Half an hour before he was supposed to go on his lunch break and continue on his completely normal day in walks Tubbo sporting a smile straight out of L'Manburg's early days before they ever had anything to worry about. Just when he was finally at peace with the fact that this Tubbo and the one he grew up with are different and that he'll never have that friendship again he shows up and he has to come to terms with it all over again.

This is not Tubbo.

"Oh, hello again," he says. "We just keep on bumping into each other, huh?"

"Yeah," Tommy gulps. "Seems like it." Tommy clears his throat. "How can I help you today?"

"I'm looking for a new winter jacket," Tubbo responds. "Nothing too fancy, just something to help me get from A to B without becoming a popsicle, you know?"

Tommy laughs, only slightly forced, and grabs a pile of sketches from under the counter, shuffling through to find ones of jackets. Please don't make him have to remake Tubbo's

jacket. Making Fundy's was one thing, he already accepted that he's letting himself treat him like he's his Fundy, his nephew, but Tubbo is another thing. He's accepted that they're not the same, he knows they can't ever be the same as they were before and he's okay with that, he's at peace with it! Having to make that jacket again will only make him think about Tubbo, his brother in all but blood, and he's afraid he'll do something he regrets.

He needs to keep his distance. They can't be friends, not in this world. It would hurt too much.

"Do you have any ideas on what the jacket should look like?" Tommy asks, pushing over the sketches with shaking hands.

"Not really," Tubbo responds slowly as he starts shifting through the provided images.

"Something warm, but not too warm. Oh and comfortable! I would really like there to be some green in it, but like forest green or something, dark green." Tommy nods. It's not the jacket he made, thank Prime. The other one was mostly brown with off white fur. He asked for green, he can make this work.

"Ooh, I like this one," Tubbo excitedly points to one of the sketches he drew up not too long ago. It's a thinner jacket, more for windy nights than snow or ice, and it has a thin wool lining on the inside for insulation. Definitely warm and definitely comfortable. And definitely not Tubbo's.

"Good choice," Tommy agrees with a nod. "Wait here a moment." Tubbo nods and Tommy walks into the back room. He scans the back room and quickly finds what he's looking for, a pile of cloth samples. He quickly grabs a couple sheets of green, brown, white, and yellow and brings them to the front.

"So these are some of the colors I think might look good," Tommy starts, laying out the colors on the desk. "This is ultimately your choice so please don't hesitate to tell me what you think."

Tubbo nods, "What colors would you put together?"

Tommy thinks for a moment before placing two shades of green, one darker than the other, an off white, and a pale brown together in front of him. "I was thinking one of the greens for the outside of the jacket and either the white or the brown for the inner lining. What do you think?"

"Um," Tubbo hums, looking over the options. He shuffles the colors around a bit, testing which one he likes best with which, before settling on a pair. "I think the darker green and the white. I like that best."

"Sounds good," Tommy nods and clears his throat again, setting aside the unneeded sketches and fabric squares for the time being. "Let's just take your measurements real quick and you'll be all set. Unless you'd like to go off premade sizes?"

Tubbo thinks for a moment, "I think I'll go with premade sizes."

“Sure thing,” Tommy responds and grabs a few base jackets from the bottom shelf. “Just try these on and tell me which one fits best.” Tubbo nods and takes the jackets, walking over to the mirror and quickly pulling on each one in turn until he finds the size he likes best.

He walks back over and puts the jackets back on the counter, placing the one he likes best separate from the others. “This one’s good,” he says, pointing to the separate one. “But could you make the hood a little bigger? And add fluff on the inside?”

“I can do that,” Tommy nods and makes a note of it on the order form he’d been keeping with everything Tubbo asked for. He quickly pencils in the identification numbers for each fabric and writes down which design and size he wants, adding ‘bigger hood + wool’ to the notes. He writes the notes slowly, taking care not to fall back into the familiar writing of Standard Galactic and to make them legible. He really needs to practice writing in Common.

“Anything else?”

“Nope, that’s all.”

“Sounds good,” Tommy says with a nod. “It should be ready by next week, if you could just write your number here I can call you when it’s ready.” He turns the paper around and Tubbo takes the pen and starts filling out the top labeled ‘customer information’. While he’s doing that Tommy starts folding the jackets and places them back on the shelf. Tubbo puts the odd quill, or the ‘pen’ as Clementine calls it, onto the sheet and pushes it over. Tommy takes it and looks it over to make sure everything is filled out before nodding and setting it to the side with the color squares piled on top. “You’re all good to go.” He did it, he made it through a whole conversation with Tubbo who’s not actually Tubbo! Now he can finally relax and get back to his completely normal day.

So,” Tubbo starts before Tommy could repeat the usual farewell message and hopefully retreat from the situation. “How long have you been sewing?” Prime damnit!

“About ten years now,” Tommy answers after a few seconds.

“Really? You must be really good then,” Tubbo answers with his most innocent face which Tommy knows means he’s actually plotting something.

“I’d say so,” Tommy answers slowly, trying to figure out what Tubbo’s planning. He wishes this were his Tubbo, then he’d know he wouldn’t have to worry about his plan, he’d probably even be in on it, and he wouldn’t feel so at odds in the situation. If this were the Tubbo he knows like the back of his hand he wouldn’t even be in this situation, he’d still be in the Smp and he’d still be being hunted by Dream if he weren’t dead already. As much as he misses his brother he knows it’s not possible to see him again and that just makes his heart hurt all the more.

“Sorry, I don’t want to pry, but you seem cool,” Tubbo says. “It was fun hanging out at Tubburger before, guess I’m just trying to get to know you better.” No, that’s what he’s trying to *avoid*. He can’t be friends with him, he *won’t*, it hurts enough just *seeing* him imagine how much worse it’d be hanging out with him knowing it’ll never be the same, knowing this isn’t *him*. No, he can’t be friends with him, he can’t.

“I- um,” Tommy stutters, not sure how to respond, how to tell someone he doesn’t want to be friends with them, and nearly sighs in relief when he’s saved from answering by the door opening, the sweet bell ringing through the room. Tubbo had already turned away and Tommy was happy to take advantage of the excuse and turned to greet the new customer, a smile on his face and his usual words of greeting on his tongue only to die in his throat as he saw just who was at the door, frozen with shock and disbelief and ever growing *grief* filling his heart.

“Hey Ranboo, I thought you wanted to stay home?” Tubbo was smiling and chatting away but Tommy was barely paying attention. The longer Tubbo talks the longer Tommy’s eyes are glued to Ranboo, *Ranboo*, who stands in the doorway, nervously smiling as he walks over to the counter as if he isn’t the ghost of his best friend.

It can’t be, Ranboo’s dead, he died months ago. It’s not possible. He swallows, his mouth going dry, as he stares at the impossible. Ranboo was standing right in front of him, talking to not-Tubbo like it’s something they do all the time and it is because they’re not dead. Ranboo isn’t dead here even though Sam killed him as he let Dream escape from prison.

“Tommy, this is Ranboo! They’re my roommate,” Tubbo introduces and looks at them expectedly.

“It’s nice to meet you,” Tommy says, voice barely a whisper, and shakily holds out a hand for Ranboo to shake. Ranboo smiles nervously before taking his hand and shaking it. The familiar shock of burning pain races through his hand and up his arm, but he can barely feel it. He’s *real*. He’s not shaking hands with a ghost, this is a *real person*. Ranboo’s *alive*.

“Nice to meet you too,” Ranboo responds and takes back his hand before placing it on Tubbo’s shoulder. “We have to get going. Did you finish up here?”

“Yeah, all good,” Tubbo smiles up at him before turning back to Tommy and waving. “How long did you say again? Until it’s done. A week, right?”

“Yeah, about that,” Tommy responds distractedly, eyes trained on Ranboo as they wait nervously behind Tubbo. He takes care to avoid their eyes as he knows how much Ranboo, and enderman in general, hate eye contact.

“Got it!” He sends Tommy a thumbs up and starts walking away with a wave. “See you later boss man!” Then they leave.

Tommy reaches up with shaky hands and starts biting at his nail, his thumb already being bitten to nearly the bed at this point. He continues biting his nail as he stares out into the window where Ranboo, who’s *alive*, had left through only a few moments earlier.

Even after shaking their hand, knowing they aren’t a ghost, he still couldn’t make himself believe that it was real, that he’d actually just seen Ranboo in the flesh, alive and breathing right in front of him. When Ranboo died he’d barely gotten the chance to mourn him, he was so focused on surviving the he hadn’t been able to do more than shed a few tears when it happened, he’d had to shove all that aside for the time being until he was sure he wouldn’t get killed by Dream. Then after that he was being chased by Dream then he was killed and



sent to a whole different universe and decided he'd be better off not facing what happened, better not accepting the fact that one of his best friends is dead when now he has everyone else to mourn too. Everyone he's ever cared about was gone, it was just better not to think about it at all. Not to think about never seeing his son again, about how he'd never hear Tubbo ranting about how awesome bees are again, or how he'd never get to make amends with his brother or nephew or anyone. He was given a second chance, he got to start over, something most people don't ever get, but in the process he lost his friends, his family, his home, his whole *world*. Thinking about all that would make him fall apart and he didn't want to think about that, about all that he'd lost, but at least they were alive.

Ranboo wasn't just in another universe than him, they were dead and that seemed far worse than just not being able to see them again, but now they're not. Now he's *alive* and he's *right there*.

*Ranboo's alive.*

A sharp jolt of pain in his finger brings him back to reality and Tommy focuses on it quickly enough to watch as the small wound he'd bitten into his finger heals, a single drop of blood all that remains. And yet his hands still shook and his throat still burned and he could feel the water welling up in his eyes.

"Don't cry," he whispers even as the first tear falls over the edge, down his cheek, and to the floor. "Don't cry, dammit." He inhales a shaky breath and takes a step away from the counter, stumbling over to the door where he flips the sign to 'closed'. His breathing is uneven and he has to gasp for almost every breath as he makes his way to the back room. He makes it to the bathroom before he falls apart.

He falls to the ground as a sob tears through him, hand rising to cover his mouth but it does nothing to stop the sound from escaping. He lets himself collapse to the floor as his tears finally begin to overflow and he pulls his knees to his chest and rests his elbows on them, hiding his face in his arms. He gasps and sobs into his arms, but the pain in his chest only seems to get worse and worse. There was a black hole where his heart should be, one that's always been there, but that he's become good at ignoring even as it ate away at him more and more with each passing day.

With a quick motion Tommy opens his inventory and a second later his photo with Shroud, his allium, and his compass were all cradled in his arms. He held them to his chest as he sobbed, taking comfort from the only things he had left of the people he cared about most. He clutched each item like they'd disappear any second and he let himself cry, truly cry, for the first time in a long, long time.

He cried for the loss of his brother as his fingers ran over the inscription in the compass. He cried for the loss of his best friend as he carefully held the allium to his heart. He cried for the loss of his son as a tear landed on the picture of them standing in front of his dirt house, Shroud bundled in the coat Tommy had made for him in preparation for their visit to Snowchester, a wide grin on both their faces. He cried and cried until his eyes had run dry of tears and all that was left was his gasping breaths and the pain in his chest as he tried to calm himself down.

He swallows, his throat dry, and stands on shaky feet. He continues to hold his most prized possessions in his arms as his eyes shift to the mirror above the sink and he comes eye to eye with his reflection. His eyes were red and puffy and there were tear streaks all down his face. It was obvious that he'd been crying and Clementine would know the second she saw him. He wishes the red puffiness of his eyes would disappear as quickly as injuries did, but unfortunately they would stay that way for a couple of hours. He'd just have to hope Clementine wouldn't get back for a while.

He sets everything down carefully off to the side and turns the water to cold, splashing his face a few times to get rid of the worst of the redness. It didn't do as much as he'd hoped, but it was better than nothing. He snuffles a few times as he gathers everything up again and carefully places the photo and flower in his hot bar, shifting a few things around to make sure everything fits. When it came time to put the compass in its place he didn't want to let it go and instead decided he'd hold onto it for a bit and slid his hand, and the compass, into his pocket.

When he walks out the door and into the front room he freezes seeing Clementine shifting around some papers at the front desk.

"Clementine," he says, clearing his throat to hopefully clear the remaining tears from his throat. Maybe if he pretends he wasn't crying she won't bring it up. He doesn't delude himself into thinking she doesn't know, he's not that stupid. "I didn't realize you were back. Sorry I closed the shop, I had something important to take care of." He doesn't make eye contact as he stands nervously in the doorway, free hand picking at the ratty seam on his shirt. He should fix it soon, it's not bad enough for it to spread, but the longer he leaves it the worse it'll get. "I'll work late to make up for it--"

"You will do no such thing," Clementine cuts in, voice still as soft and calm as always. "You, young man, are going to go home and rest."

Tommy pales and his eyes widen. Fuck, she knows he was crying. Just by looking out the window he could tell a long time had passed that he spent crying instead of working. Please don't let him be fired, he loves this job and he loves Clementine and he really doesn't want to have to leave. "I--"

"Tommy," she says and Tommy's mouth snaps shut. "It's alright, I'm not mad. Everyone cries from time to time. I may not know why you were, but that's your business and you don't have to tell me. All I want is for you to take a bit and let yourself feel better. If that means sending you home or letting you spend the rest of the day at the cafe with your friends, then I want you to do it, okay? As long as you do what helps you feel better."

Tommy has to clear his throat again, grateful he doesn't have any more tears to shed or he'd start crying again right then and there. He doesn't know what he did to deserve having someone so kind in his life, someone so truly kind and caring. He can only hope he doesn't mess it up one day and drive her away like he's done to so many others. He takes a deep breath and finally looks Clementine in the eyes. "Thank you," he manages to say with only a slight warble to his words, "for everything."

“You don’t need to thank me,” she says with a soft smile. “Now, you get out of here and do something for yourself and I better not see you until tomorrow morning at the earliest. Take the whole week if that’s what you need.”

“No, I’ll- I’ll be here tomorrow,” Tommy responds with a soft laugh. “Bright and early.”

“Alright dear, I’ll see you tomorrow. Now get,” she says with a smile and Tommy laughs as she shoos him towards the door. “Feel better Tommy,” she says as his hand lands on the door handle.

“Thanks again Clementine,” Tommy says with a wobbly smile before finally leaving the shop.

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“So what’s going on?” Tubbo asks as he and Ranboo walk away from Clem’s Couturier.

“Schlatt has a shipment coming in later,” Ranboo responds and immediately Tubbo’s demeanor shifts.

“What is it this time?”

“Mostly chemicals,” Ranboo responds.

“Shit,” Tubbo curses under his breath, fists clenching. “I thought he stopped that.”

Ranboo nods, “We both did.”

“We’ll take out the shipment before it reaches him,” Tubbos says and Ranboo nods. He was sure Schlatt had stopped this bullshit after he left, but apparently he’s picked it back up again, if he ever stopped in the first place. The guy’s always been obsessed with being the most powerful he could possibly be and those chemicals won’t give him that even if he thinks it will, all he’ll end up doing is hurt people who don’t deserve it. “Does he have anyone captive?”

“Not that I know of,” Ranboo shakes their head.

“So he’s planning something then,” Tubbo mutters before cursing again, letting out a harsh breath. “You’d think he’d have given up by now.” Ranboo just nods.

When they finally arrive back at their apartment they start getting ready. Weapons are cleaned and inspected to make sure they’re in tip top shape, their armor is reinforced, and their masks are double checked to be secure. The last thing either of them needs is their identity getting out, especially Tubbo.

Eventually the sun fell beyond the horizon and the dim light of the moon through their window alerted them that it was time to go. They donned their costumes and climbed up to the roof.

“Where?” Aries asks, checking to make sure his homemade grenades are secure.

“North-west Snowchester,” Enderwalk responds.

“And you’ll be able to get us there?” Aries asks, worried. “That’s a far jump.”

Enderwalk nods, “In small jumps, yeah.” Aries nods and holds out his arm. Enderwalk grabs it and a second later activates their power.

Aries holds his breath as the familiar feeling of teleportation surrounds him. It’s like being squeezed through a straw and shot out at unimaginable speeds that lasts for ages and no time at all and he still doesn’t know how Ranboo can handle doing it so much. They said he’ll get used to it, but he doesn’t know how that’s possible. He still gets nauseous when he teleports too much, especially when he’s the one teleporting instead of just being carried along.

Finally they arrive and Aries has to take a minute for the nausea to pass, leaning against the side of the building, before they can continue to the docks where the shipment is coming in. When they arrive it’s to people yelling back and forth as they unload crates from a ship. They’re nondescript at first glance, but Aries knows them well enough at this point that he knows exactly what’s in them.

The materials needed to create a power enhancement drug, more specifically a drug that when used will give the person the ability to use a power that is not their own. At least that’s what Schlatt thinks. It’s not possible, you can’t enhance a power let alone copy people’s powers to give to others, there’s just no way, but Schlatt’s still trying anyway which means he needs to be stopped. All he’s going to do is hurt and kill more people for a fruitless endeavor and he’s not going to let that happen, not again.

Aries and Enderwalk crouch on top of a nearby building and watch as another crate is loaded into a truck. They make eye contact and nod before Enderwalk disappears in a flurry of purple sparks and Aries unhooks a grenade from his belt. He switches off the safety and presses the button before throwing it at the truck. He ducks down and presses himself behind the concrete edge of the building.

“Three...two...one,” he whispers to himself right before the grenade explodes on time with his countdown. There’s screams and shouts as they try to regroup and Aries takes that as his cue to attack. He leaps off the roof and lands in a roll on the damaged truck, the cab and a good portion of the back destroyed and caved in. He ducks to avoid bullets as some take to shooting at him only to jump down on the other side. Someone comes running at him and he punches them in the chest sending them flying back, unconscious and probably not dead.

He ducks under another punch this time from his right and returns with one of his own. His eyes had begun to emit a low orange light at this point and he was forever thankful his goggles blocked others from seeing it. If they saw it’s likely they would connect him back to Schlatt’s supposedly dead son whose eyes would glow when using his power, he has no doubt Schlatt told them what to be on the lookout for when he escaped.

He hears the sound of an enderman behind him which means Enderwalk had cleared the ship and was out of range. Aries unhooks another of his homemade grenades as he dodges and returns another punch, quickly flipping off the safety and pressing the button on top. He tosses it back at the ship and a second later there’s a loud bang. The shockwave sends people

flying, Aries ducking behind a shipping container to avoid the backlash, and the ship groans as it starts to dip under the waves, a large hole in the side of the hull with more crates of chemicals visible inside.

“Aries, watch out!” Enderwalk shouts as someone grabs him from behind. Aries elbows the man holding him, but the arm around his neck only tightens and his anger flares. His hands grab the arm and with a flash of blue-white light the man behind him goes limp, electricity flowing from Aries’ fingers into the man’s arm. Aries pushes the man off him and he collapses to the ground and Aries is off, taking down person after person until there was no one left standing to defend the chemicals.

“Are you alright?” Aries asks as he regroups with Enderwalk.

“I’m alright,” they answer. “A few scrapes and bruises, but nothing serious. You?”

“Same,” Aries answers. “Start of a headache.” Enderwalk winces. Yeah, Tubbo isn’t looking forward to that either. If that guy didn’t attack him he wouldn’t have to deal with a legendary level headache, but he did so now he’s going to have to deal with it. It happens everytime he pushes his powers too far. “Let’s go,” Aries says and grabs one last grenade and tosses it into the back of the truck. Enderwalk grabs his shoulder and teleports them away before the explosion could go off and he hears the loud bang as they land a couple buildings away. With the boat sunk and the truck destroyed there’s nothing left for Schlatt to use and that made pride and satisfaction well up in his chest. Schlatt wouldn’t be able to hurt anyone for a while longer and soon he won’t be able to hurt anyone ever again.

## Chapter End Notes

Ranboo and Tommy have finally met!

Next chapter Tommy meets someone new, who do you think it will be?

# Chapter Twenty-Five

## Chapter Summary

Tommy meets another familiar face, his best friend is denial, and Niki and Wilbur have a chat.

## Chapter Notes

Tw's:  
None

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy's steps are heavy as he walks back to his apartment, each step a thought back to a person he's lost. His eyes droop lower with each step and his hand doesn't once leave the compass in his pocket, gripping it like a lifeline. The sun was getting lower and lower in the sky and it was easy to see that he'd missed lunch.

He finally reaches his apartment and doesn't bother softening his fall as he drops himself onto the couch, immediately almost falling off. He takes the compass from his pocket and holds it above his head, finger tracing the inscription.

“Your Tubbo’,” He whispers before sighing. He lets his hand fall, the compass sandwiched between it and his chest, and lets his eyes fall closed. He lays like that for a long while, thinking of nothing but the weight of the compass on his chest, before he pulls himself up into a sitting position. He numbly opens his inventory and as he's deciding whether he should put the compass away or hold onto it for a while longer his eyes catch on something he forgot he even had. Carefully putting the compass on the coffee table Tommy grabs the new weapon and holds it in front of him, inventory closing without much thought.

The gun was unassuming, it didn't look like the weapon of mass destruction he'd come to realize it was. It's small, smaller than any bow or crossbow he's ever seen, and made of metal that weighed heavily in his hand. The trigger was similar enough to a crossbow along with the mechanics themselves that he figures he might be pretty decent at it, but he has a feeling that isn't right.

He turns the weapon a few times, inspecting it from different angles, but he isn't really sure how to work it. From what he's seen you were supposed to slide the top back then point and pull the trigger, but it can't be that easy, right? Doesn't matter, he's not going to use it.

Tommy reopens his inventory window and tucks it away in the far left corner, out of sight and out of mind. He'd rather not have it in his inventory at all but he has a feeling it's not a good idea to keep it laying around his apartment. This'll be safer even if the idea of keeping it on him makes his skin crawl.

With a sigh he picks himself up from the couch and, grabbing his compass, trudges over to his window, quickly opening it and slipping out with practiced motions. He climbs up the fire escape and settles down on the roof in his usual spot, but instead of pulling out his laptop to do more research he just opens his inventory window. It's about time he does some organizing.

He didn't pay any attention to the gun, it would stay right where it was, and turned his attention to the rest of his belongings. The left two slots of his hot bar had his 'death unto others' clothes and his pajamas. From there were his keys, then his laptop, a bottle of milk, an empty slot, then his axe and his sword. His photo, allium, and discs were all in the top right corner where they could be easily seen while still kept safe, an empty slot left nearby for if he decided to put his compass away. For the time being the compass remains in his pocket, the needle forever spinning in a constant circle with its anchor in another universe.

He hasn't tried to make an ender chest, or anything really crafting wise, since he got to this universe but he doubts it would work if he can't collect blocks and while he'd like one it doesn't matter too much. His inventory is just as safe if not safer since he doesn't drop his inventory when he dies.

The rest of his items, a pickaxe, shovel, emergency cup of coffee, the poker chip Jester gave him, and a pie of dust, are all placed randomly around his inventory. He shuffles them around a bit to make it at least seem neat, read he just puts them all in the middle row since there isn't much you can do by way of organization when it comes to inventories, before letting his hands fall back to his compass.

Tommy is about to close his inventory and move on to doing something else when he senses something behind him and whips around, jumping to his feet as his sword appears in his hand in an instant, the compass sent safely away to his inventory for the time being. He doesn't hesitate to hold the sword level with the person's neck, already glaring, and their hands fly up in the universal sign for mercy.

"Okay then, I see why all the others went missing," the person says, amused, but Tommy could see a well disguised flash of fear in his eyes. Tommy smirks. Tommy then squints, the voice familiar. He scans the person, searching them for any recognizable features, and after a few seconds it hits him. Purpled?

He just barely stops himself from saying the name out loud, shocked for some reason despite the recurring pattern of the people he recognizes popping out of nowhere. He looks much the same as he remembers him. He had the same bright purple eyes with diamond shaped pupils that almost seemed to glow in the darkness along with sandy blonde hair and purple antenna. Not to mention the same purple hoodie Tommy never once saw him without. He was wearing a mask around his eyes, a stupid thing that didn't hide shit, and Tommy's pretty sure he saw knives in pouches on his belt which definitely aren't super cool. Purpled continues speaking, cutting off anything Tommy might think to say.

“I’m not here to fight,” he says, hands still raised lazily by his head. Tommy pushed the sword just a little bit closer in warning and his hand raised again, laziness leaving at the reminded threat. Tommy seriously doubts he didn't sneak up on him to not fight. On top of that he practically just admitted he’s an assassin. Why would he take that chance?

“Look, can you put the sword down?” Purpled asked, sounding annoyed, but Tommy could tell he wasn’t as relaxed as he tried to make himself seem. He may be standing like this is a casual conversation, minus his arms still raised by his head of course, but Tommy can see that he’s nervous. No matter how hard a person pretends it’s always the eyes that give them away and Purpled’s eyes are showing his admittedly well concealed fear. Tommy wasn’t going to rely on it. He was most likely only so on edge because he didn’t expect Tommy to react so quickly. Purpled was known for getting out of these kinds of situations back on the Smp and he doesn’t doubt that he’s the same here. “I swear I’m not here to kill you. I was offered the job, but I turned it down. I know when a job is stupid to accept. No matter how much money they’re offering.”

“Not even for all the money in the world?” Tommy huffs disbelievingly. The Purpled he knew was never one to turn down money even if it meant killing someone to get it. Not that Tommy can judge much, he’s done his fair share of killing, both here and in the Smp.

“What’s the point of having money if you’re not alive to enjoy it?”

Tommy continues to stare at him for a few moments longer before allowing the sword to drop to his side with no intention of putting it away.

“Thanks,” Purpled huffs and brushes off his clothes. “So, you do have a power then?” Tommy narrows his eyes and his hand tightens around the sword. Purpled lazily lifts his hands again, huffing in amusement with a roll of his eyes, “Relax, I’m just curious. I was told you didn’t have one.”

“I don’t,” Tommy scoffs.

“You don’t have a power?” Purpled says disbelievingly, pointedly looking at the sword Tommy seemingly grabbed out of nowhere when he arrived.

“It’s none of your business,” Tommy snaps. “The fuck do you want?”

“I want a truce,” Purpled responds. “I’d be stupid to go after you after what happened to the others. They just so happened to get killed by that Ichor guy the same day they went after you? Yeah right. I’d be an idiot to accept a hit like that. It’s like asking to be killed. That is you, right? Can’t see it being anyone else.”

“Ichor?” Tommy questions, suspicious and maybe a little confused.

“Yeah, that warehouse killer guy?” Purpled asks, seeming surprised he doesn’t know the name. “Oh yeah, it’s not a press thing, it’s just what people are calling him.” Purpled shrugs.

“Like an alias?”



“More like an unofficial villain name, but sure that works too.”

“I’m not a villain,” Tommy snarls. He gets a raised brow at that and Tommy scowls. “You know what, I don’t care. How about you tell me why I shouldn’t just kill you?”

“For what reason? I showed up here asking for a truce.” Purpled arms are crossed and he glowers at Tommy.

“You know who I am,” Tommy counters. “And you’d do anything for money. Well, almost anything.”

“Like I said, my life isn’t worth all the money a person could give me,” Purpled answers. “And I’m here to offer my services. Betrayal ends in death every time and if you not only survived but beat entire *gangs* of experienced killers I doubt I’d be the one to walk away from that fight.”

He sure as hell wouldn’t. “I don’t need an assassin.”

“I can tell,” Purpled scoffs, casting a look at the sword Tommy still holds at his side. Tommy’s hand tenses almost unconsciously. “That’s not what I mean. I’m not just an assassin you know. I’ll help you figure out why the others are after you or find out what the heroes know about you and report back. That kind of thing.”

“And what’s in it for you?”

Purpled shrugs, “I don’t get killed? I don’t get on Jester’s bad side? I have an ally I can call on when I need it?”

“A favor then,” Tommy scowls.

“Exactly,” Purpled responds. “A favor.”

“Again, why should I agree?” Tommy questions. “The second I do something for you, you could turn on me. Turn me in, out me to the heroes.”

“I have a feeling that wouldn’t stop you from getting back at me,” Purpled responds. “If the rumors are anything to go by of course.”

“It wouldn’t.”

Purpled shrugs, “You’re just going to have to trust me.”

“I don’t trust, *Purpled*.”

Purpled freezes, “How do you know that name?”

“Purpled?” Tommy responds, a grin starting to form. “Oh, you mean your name?”

“How the fuck do you know my name?” Purpled snarls. “No one should know that name.”

“I don’t think it matters,” Tommy responds in a drawl. If this is how Quackity feels holding information over people he can understand why he does it. Man, is it a power trip. “It seems we have our safety net. I know who you are and you know who I am. You don’t out me and I don’t out you.”

“Deal,” Purpled sticks out his hand. Tommy wills his sword away and shakes the outstretched hand. Purple strings of light, lighter than the one’s his mother occasionally uses, wrap around their hands like a net and Tommy’s hand wouldn’t listen as he tried to pull it away, not until the strings had sunk into their skin could Tommy snatch back his hand. He glares, hackles rising. In the corner of his vision a ‘potion effect’ appears, an image of two purple hands shaking wrapped in string on a square shaped background.

“What the fuck was that?” Tommy snarls, ready to summon his sword all over again.

“My power,” Purpled says. “Any deal I shake on with someone becomes set in stone. There is no way to overpower it.”

“If you’re lying to me I will kill you,” Tommy answers.

Purpled shrugs, “I’m not. If you really want to be sure you can ask Jester, he’ll tell you.”

Tommy is silent for a long while, glaring. “Fine,” he spits and lets his hand fall to his side, no longer poised to grab a weapon and add another tally to his mental count of people he’s killed.

“By the way, I go by Dealbreaker, though I’m sure you already know that,” Purpled informs him, entirely too at ease. Tommy decides he’s going to punch him one day. He doesn’t know when or how, but he will. Right in his stupid face.

“Thanks, now fuck off,” Tommy smiles insincerely, more baring his teeth than anything else. “I have stuff to do.”

“I will see you again soon, Ichor.” He’s gone before Tommy can protest. As cool as Ichor is as a name, he’s not a villain. He doesn’t *need* a villain name. He’s just a civilian who occasionally kills people in self defense.

Tommy waits until he’s sure he’s gone before huffing, dropping down to the roof and summoning his laptop, back pressed against the not-as-cold-as-it-used-to-be box. Once he’s comfortable he starts his research. Page after page he searches for information about Dealbreaker as Purpled had called himself and while he didn’t find much there was enough that he feels confident enough that he wasn’t lying about his power and decided to let the subject drop. He’d really rather not use his question yet and he doesn’t want to have to owe Jester any more than he has to.

He does decide to drink the milk he keeps in his inventory to see if it makes the effect go away but when it doesn’t Tommy just accepts that it’s there for good.

Tommy hears a different set of footsteps set down on the roof, ones that Tommy easily recognizes, and he closes his laptop, turning to the person with a smile.

“Siren.”

“Tommy,” he responds and drops himself down next to Tommy. “How’s it going?”

“Alright,” Tommy responds, relaxing back into the cold box and looks out over the skyline. There wasn’t much to see besides buildings and lights, but it was nice. “Could be better, could be worse.”

“Did something happen?” Siren asks.

“Nothing too important,” Tommy responds despite it being the farthest thing from the truth. Calling Ranboo being alive ‘unimportant’ was like calling Tubbo his enemy, it just wasn’t true.

“Do you want to talk about it?”

Tommy is quiet for a long while as he contemplates. “I don’t know.”

“You don’t have to if you don’t want to,” Siren says. “I know it can be difficult to open up to people, especially ones you don’t even really know.” He gestures to where a mask would be if he wore one, his glowing eyes somehow obscuring his identity. How that works Tommy will never know.

“Well, I feel like that would make sharing easier,” Tommy responds, head turning to look at Siren. “It’s harder to open up to people you know you’re going to see again. If you care about someone’s opinion and what they think about you it’s harder to tell them things that might change how they look at you.”

“Yeah, I guess that’s true,” Siren responds with a shrug. “But it’s always more important that the ones you’re close to know things about you.”

“Opening up to people you know never brings anything good,” Tommy responds. He’s not about to give out all his weaknesses and vulnerabilities to people he knows, it’ll hurt more when they use it against him. He’s learned his lesson, if he had his way he never would have reconnected with people he recognized from the Smp but since he already has he keeps an oath with himself, he won’t make the same mistakes he made before.

But Siren isn’t from the Smp, is he? He looks similar to Wilbur, and he’s scarily familiar at times, but he’s not Wilbur and he didn’t know him on the Smp. There weren’t as many people on the Smp as there are here, but there were still a lot of people, more than he could have ever met. Maybe Siren fought with L’Manburg, he could see it, one of the nameless faces that saw L’Manburg as their home and rose to defend it against Dream’s tyranny. For all he knew Siren fought with Dream and he’s familiar because they met in battle, one of them leaving as the victor and the other as the loser, but the point is, he doesn’t know him.

Siren is new, a variable he doesn’t know whether or not to trust, and he hates to say that he might just be starting to, just a little, and that was scarier than any assassin coming for his life.

“I’m worried,” Tommy ends up saying and Siren turns his attention back to Tommy. Tommy refuses to look anywhere but a building in the distance, the light at the very top keeping his attention for no reason other than to have something to focus on other than the stupid decision he’s making.

“About the warehouse killer?”

“About my family,” Tommy answers. “I never really got to say goodbye before I...left.” Tommy takes a deep breath. He’s really doing this, huh? “I guess it just finally hit me that they’re gone now.”

“Are they...” Siren trails off, deciding against asking and Tommy’s glad for it. He doesn’t know how to answer. He can’t exactly tell Siren that one of his brothers died but was revived, the ghost he’d grown attached to leaving as he returned, and his other dying by the hand of someone he trusted just hours before he left but he was so consumed with terror and so dead set on pushing away any and all negative feelings that he never properly grieved and how despite the people he cares about still being alive he can’t ever see them again because they’re in whole other universe and no matter how much he cares for and misses them nothing could ever make him go back. If it were even possible, which he doubts.

“I’m glad you told me,” Siren finally says, tone solemn and soft. Tommy looks at him and searches his eyes but there wasn’t a single ounce of pity in them. He was sad and empathetic, but he did not pity him. Tommy’s chest feels warm and he can feel some of the cold fog that settled over his brain when he first saw Ranboo all those hours ago finally start to retreat, not enough to shake it away, but enough that he felt himself show the hint of a smile.

“Yeah,” Tommy responds. “You better not tell anyone,” Tommy says suddenly in the silence. “You’re the only one I’m trusting with this.”

“I promise,” Siren says, hand over his heart as he makes direct eye contact with him to show his sincerity. “I swear on Lady Death that I won’t tell a soul.”

Tommy sighs at the oath, relaxing muscles he didn’t realize he’d tensed. He settles back against the cold box once more, allowing the space between him and Siren to shrink ever so slightly. Tommy turns his eyes up to the sky and breathes deep, the comforting feel of nature wrapping him in a warm blanket. There’s a voice in the back of his mind that tells him he made a mistake, that Siren isn’t someone he should trust with even the little he shared, but he ignores it. He doesn’t trust people, it’s not something he does anymore, but maybe he can start taking the steps towards trusting someone again. Puffy did say the only way to heal was to take conscious steps towards it.

Yeah, he thinks maybe this might be okay.

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The next morning Tommy found he didn’t regret sharing what he had with Siren, but the thought of someone knowing even just that little bit about him left him on edge. He’s not used to telling people things about himself, especially not something that leaves him vulnerable, and he’s still trying to decide if it left him feeling better or worse. He’s only very

rarely opened up to Tubbo or Ranboo and even then anything he said was highly edited so as not to give away too much. He trusted them, but he didn't want to seem weak in front of anyone, not even them.

On the plus side there's someone here he can tell at least some things to while on the down side he's still not sure if he should be trusting Siren as much as he does and doesn't that throw him for a loop. He trusts Siren, not as much as he trusted Tubbo but even the little bit of trust he has in Siren is more than he's used to giving. The thought of trusting someone makes an anxious pit open up in his stomach and he can feel himself sinking into the bottomless fear that comes with it, but he can't let himself be pulled in. He needs to find people he trusts in this world, he can't have those relationships he left back so he has to make new ones, no matter how much it might hurt to do it.

"Are you feeling better?" Clementine asks. She's been puttering around the back room all morning doing something or other, giving him space, but now as his lunch break approaches she makes her way over to him.

He bobs his head, "Yeah, a little. Thanks Clementine."

"Take all the time you need to feel better," she says. "If you want to spend more time with your friends today go right ahead."

"Thanks Clementine," Tommy responds. "I think I might do that."

"Good, now go on. Go to lunch," she says and shoos him away. He smiles as he waves and exits the store, his scarf and moth pin secured around his neck. It was windy on the walk over to the cafe and Tommy could see clouds gathering above him. He relaxes into the feeling of the wind and smiles softly, it's going to rain. He likes the rain.

He arrives at the cafe and the second the comforting atmosphere hits him he relaxes just a little, the unease leaving him bit by bit throughout the day.

"Hey Tommy," Niki greets with her usual smile.

"Hey Niki," Tommy responds and glances over the pastry case for the day's choices. "I think I'll try some macarons today."

"Sure thing, what flavors do you want?" Niki asks.

"A strawberry, caramel, and...vanilla I guess."

"Coming right up." She gathers his macarons then makes his usual hot chocolate and sets them on the counter.

"Thanks Niki," Tommy says and places the money on the counter. Before he can walk away Niki stops him, her hand touching his just long enough to get his attention. Pain flares dully and travels from his fingers up his wrist but he turns his attention back towards her and ignores the feeling.

"Sorry, but I wanted to talk for a few minutes if that's alright," Niki says, apologetic.

“Sure,” Tommy says and looks around. “Let me grab a chair.” He sets his food and drink on the counter and pulls a chair over to the edge. It was off to the side enough that people could still approach the till and order, but still close enough that he could easily hold a conversation with Niki. Niki brings over his order from where he left it and Tommy doesn’t hesitate to take a sip of his hot chocolate, sighing as the warm drink seeps into his veins and washes away the chill of the rainy afternoon. “So, what’s up?”

“How are you doing?” Niki asks. “How’s work? And Clementine? I feel like we haven’t caught up in a while.”

“Yeah, I don’t stay by the counter so much anymore do I?” Niki shakes her head softly and Tommy nods. “I’ll have to hang out here more often then.”

“Sounds great,” she answers.

“Well, to answer your questions. I’m doing alright, Clem too. She’s been trusting me with the shop a lot more, lets me run it for a few hours sometimes while she goes to see her friend. I’m glad, she didn’t really have any time to see her before.”

“That’s good,” Niki answers. “I’m glad you’re both doing well.”

“Yeah, I’m glad too. It’s calm, I like it.”

“Calm is good,” Niki agrees. “Did you see a friend yesterday? Fundy, was it?”

“No, why do you ask?” Tommy asks, brows furrowed. Why does she think he saw Fundy yesterday?

“I was just wondering, you weren’t here yesterday so I just assumed you hung out with Fundy,” she shrugs.

“Nah, Clem made me take the afternoon off so I decided to chill at home for a bit,” Tommy answers. He should hang out with Fundy again soon, maybe they can go to Kinoko or something. He heard they have good mushroom dishes and he’s curious to try some. He read about something called chicken marsala that they’re famous for.

“Oh, I’m glad you decided to rest for a bit. You work more hours than I do,” Niki chuckles.

“I’m sure that’s not true,” Tommy dismisses.

“Definitely more than I worked at your age.”

“And how do you know how old I am Niki, hm?” Tommy jokes, making a face.

Instead of laughing at the obvious joke like he thought she would, she seems nervous and uncomfortable as she answers. “I’m just guessing.

“Hey, it was just a joke Niki,” Tommy assures, trying to get her to stop looking so uneasy. “I know you don’t actually know how old I am.”

“No, I don’t,” she answers after a moment, but she doesn’t look any less upset.

“I’m seventeen by the way,” he says, hoping it would calm her down. She stays silent like she’s thinking and Tommy takes that moment to bite into a macaron, hoping to use it as a subject change. It works. “Holy shit, Niki. This is fucking great!” He shoves the second macaron in his mouth and it’s just as good as the first.

“Yeah?”

“Fuck yeah,” he answers, eating the last of the three in one bite. He quickly checks his hunger bar and finds he could probably have a couple more. They were small and since he skipped the cafe the day before his bar was lower than usual. “Can I have some more?”

“Sure,” Niki responds. “Same flavors?”

“Um,” Tommy hums as he looks over the flavors and decides to change it up a bit. “Can I try a pistachio, a lemon, and another caramel?”

“Of course,” Niki grabs the macarons and Tommy passes her the money before she could protest. He eats those almost as quickly as he did the first three and at that point his hunger was full enough that he couldn’t have any more.

“Thank you for the pastries Niki, delicious as always,” he cheers.

“I’m glad you like them,” Niki responds, taking his dishes before he could clean them up himself.

“Hey, I could have done that.”

“Well, I did it first,” Niki responds. “Think of it as a thank you for gracing me with your presence,” she jokes with a wink.

“Aww, Niki,” Tommy responds. “I’m always happy to hang out with you.” He really did like to hang out with her. She’s nice and he likes being able to talk to her like they used to in L’Manburg. He’s long since gotten over their initial meeting when all he could think of was the Niki that tried to kill him with a nuke.

“Tommy!” he hears and turns his head to see Wilbur jogging up, a wide smile on his face. “It’s good to see you.” His smile looked like it was going to take over his face if he smiled any wider.

“The fuck is up with you?” Tommy asks. “Why are you all smiley and shit?”

“I had a good day,” Wilbur responds.

“Okay,” Tommy says slowly. His eyes drift to the clock and he realizes he’s been here for his usual amount and despite leaving the shop early and Clementine said he could stay later, he decides it’s time to leave. The fabric for Quackity’s suit is supposed to arrive today and he’s excited to get a start on it. “I think I’m going to head out now,” Tommy says and stands, dragging the chair back to where he got it from.

“Already?” Wilbur pouts. “I just got here.”

“Sorry big man,” Tommy shrugs. “I got stuff to do. Unlike you, I do have a job you know.”

“Okay, I’ll see you tomorrow?” Tommy expected Wilbur to take the bait and start a debate over the fact that he didn’t have a job, even though everyone knows he doesn’t have one, but didn’t think much of it after his initial surprise.

“Course,” Tommy responds. “Bye Wilbur, bye Niki.” He waves to them as he leaves and on the walk back he starts planning how to make the suit out of the fabric that’ll hopefully be waiting for him when he gets back.

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Niki didn’t know how to react. She knew Tommy was joking when he brought up his age, but she couldn’t pull her mind away from the fact that she does know how old he is. Not because he told her or because she took a guess but because she’s seen his file. She knows personal information about him that she has no business knowing and he has no idea.

This isn’t the first time she’s felt guilty about having seen his file, but it’s the first time any of the information was really brought up. That guilt is what prompted her not to text Wilbur when Tommy got to the cafe, guilt that only doubled when Tommy made that joke. Usually she sends him a quick text to let him know so he’ll actually be able to see Tommy that day, but today that just felt *wrong*. She’s not even sure how it all started. Before Wilbur started visiting the cafe she never felt guilty when it came to Tommy. Empathetic, yes. Sad, also yes. Angry, sometimes and usually on his behalf. But not guilty, never guilty. What would she have to be guilty about? Then Wilbur asked her to start letting him know when Tommy was there and suddenly it was there. It was faint in the beginning, she didn’t see anything wrong with what she was doing at first. It was just a friend letting their other friend know when their mutual friend was there so they could hang out, but the longer it went on the more she felt guilty over it and the more she realized it wasn’t as blameless as she once thought.

She wasn’t surprised when Wilbur brought it up after Tommy left.

“He left so quickly,” Wilbur pouts, huffing in disappointment. “Why didn’t you text me?”

“I don’t know,” she sighs.

“Oh and did you find out why he wasn’t here yesterday?”

“I did but-”

“What was it? He wasn’t doing too well when I saw him yesterday so that was probably it.”

“Wilbur-”

“Oh! He talked to me yesterday, I mean really talked to me. He opened up about some stuff going on, to Siren I mean, and-”



“Wilbur!” Niki snaps, the harshness of her voice shutting him up in a blink. She takes a deep breath to steady herself before she responds. “This needs to stop.”

“What does?”

“Wilbur, this isn’t right,” Niki stresses, her guilt bubbling to the surface. “I can’t keep doing this to him.”

“Doing what? Niki, I don’t understand.” Niki can see in his eyes that he truly doesn’t realize that he’s doing anything wrong so she takes pity on him and explains.

“Wilbur,” she starts kindly but sternly. “Sometimes it feels like you’re not friends with Tommy to be friends with him. Sometimes it seems like you’re only friends with him because you want to satisfy your own curiosity.”

“That’s not-”

“I’m not saying you don’t care about him,” she cuts him off, raising a hand to ask for his silence for just a few moments more. “It’s obvious you do, but I’m not wrong and you know it. I want no part of it anymore. I won’t text you when Tommy gets to the cafe. I won’t pry into his life to find out where he was or what he’s doing when he isn’t here. And I won’t listen when you spill everything he trusted *Siren* with to me. It feels wrong, Wilbur. He has every right to do as he wishes and if he decides to go somewhere else to eat or hang out with other people or even trust *Siren* with things then that’s his decision.”

Wilbur is silent for a long while, quiet and dejected as he realizes what he’d been doing. Until finally he whispers, “I didn’t realize...you’re right, I need to stop being so...I don’t know, I just need to stop. You’re right, I’m being too nosy and insensitive. I’ll do better, I swear.”

Niki nods, “Good.” She takes a deep breath that she lets out in a sigh before changing the topic. “Let’s talk about something else.”

“Like what?”

“You’re taking off Independence day, right?”

“Mhm,”

“How about you come over that morning,” she offers. “You can help me bake some desserts to bring to Puffy’s.”

“Can I have some too?”

“Of course,” Niki says. “But you have to actually help me bake them. No just sitting in a seat and stealing bites from whatever comes out of the oven.”

“But *Niki*,” Wilbur whines. “I can’t bake for shit.”

“Too bad,” Niki responds. “You will help me bake and I will let you have as much coffee as you want.”

“As much as I want?” Wilbur repeats with stars in his eyes.

“Within reason,” Niki corrects, sending him a look. “I still won’t let you go over the limit Phil set.”

“Just a little,” Wilbur pleads, pinching his fingers together. “Please?”

Niki folds with a huff and a smile. “Fine, but only a little!” she tacks on when he starts dancing around in celebration.

“Yes!” he exclaims. “You will not regret this Niki.”

“I’m sure I will,” she sighs.

“You won’t!” he insists, pointing a finger in her direction, pausing his dancing for a moment. Niki chuckles at his over dramatic antics and Wilbur quickly joins in. And just like that the guilt in her chest finally starts to soften and disperse. Still there, but considerably less. It’s nice not feeling like she’s constantly betraying a friend anymore.

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Tommy sighs as he walks home through the light rain, arm holding his sketch for Quackity’s suit to his chest to protect it from the water, every once in a while looking down at it to see if he can get any new ideas. So far he hasn’t had much luck. He was hoping seeing the fabric he bought in person would help him find the right design but it got delayed another day which means he’s got a whole nother day to struggle with the design before getting to see the fabric when he’ll probably change it all over again. It just didn’t look *right*.

He grabs his keys and goes to open his door, but he finds the door is already open. He creeps up to his door, hand hovering over his hot bar to grab a weapon the second he might need it, and carefully starts pushing it open. He peaks into the room and doesn’t immediately see anyone, but he knows there’s someone there, he can feel it.

“Hello Tommy.”

## Chapter End Notes

Purpled has arrived! And Tommy's definitely not a villain name has finally been revealed! It took me ages to settle on a name I liked and I think I'm pretty happy with this one.

Thank you all so much for reading and for all your comments, bookmarks and kudos, they all just make my day!

# Chapter Twenty-Six

## Chapter Summary

Tommy deals with the person in his apartment and the fabric for Quackity's suit arrives.

## Chapter Notes

Tw's:  
None

A bit of a shorter chapter this time around, sorry!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Hello Tommy.”

All of Tommy’s wariness leaves in an instant at the voice, his shoulders falling from his ears as he walks into this living room. “Oh, it’s just you.”

“Just me?” Jester responds, lounging on his couch with Slime standing just behind him. “Most would be terrified at the thought of finding me in their apartment.”

“I’m not most,” Tommy responds casually. “The fuck do you want?”

“I bring what you requested,” Jester responds and waves his hand. Slimecicle produces a bow and quiver of arrows from behind the couch and holds them out for him to take. Tommy steps forward to take them, but Jester holds out a hand. “My question first.”

“Shoot,” Tommy responds, expecting the interruption.

Jester stares at Tommy for a long moment, debating over his question, before finally answering. “The night we first met you ran into the vigilante’s Aries and Enderwalk and you were covered in blood. Why?”

“Someone’s done their research.” Jester only grins, teeth seeming sharper in the light. “I killed someone.”

Jester seems surprised at the honest, straightforward answer, but gets over it quickly and only seems excited. “Killed someone? And why, pray tell, did you do that?”

“A good businessman would hide their interest.”

“Yes, but you aren’t the usual type I work with.”

“And what type would that be?”

“I say we’re getting off topic.”

“Are we?” Jester sends him an unimpressed look. “You know the rules. Answer my question and I’ll answer your’s.”

“I don’t usually work with people so,” Jester takes a moment to find the right word. “Fearless. I’m considered one of the worst villains in all of Esempii’s history and yet you don’t seem fazed in the slightest. Why use information gathering tactics with you when I doubt they’ll work.”

“Good call,” Tommy responds, leaning against the kitchen island as he looks into the living room.

“And my question?”

“I killed him because he attacked me. It was self defense and an accident.” He really didn’t mean to kill the guy. He’s used to people having decent enough reflexes to move out of the way, reflexes the bastard for some reason didn’t have.

“Well that’s disappointing.” He didn’t look all that disappointed.

“Deal with it,” Tommy snaps and pushes off the counter. Jester looks amused as he waves Slime forward. Tommy takes the offered bow and quiver, easily pulling the quiver over his head and adjusting it until it sits right after looking it over for imperfections. Tommy then takes a close look at the bow, testing it a few times, before nodding. “This’ll work, thanks.”

“Don’t thank me,” Jester says. “We both got something out of this.”

“Mhm,” Tommy responds absentmindedly, still testing the string of the bow.

“Speaking of questions, you still have one to ask, you know.”

“I haven’t decided what to ask yet,” Tommy responds. He then takes the bow and notches an arrow, pulling it back and aiming at a particularly large bug on the wall behind Jester. He lets the arrow fly, smirking as the arrow shoots past Jester’s head, brushing through his hair and just barely missing his ear.

“You got it!” Slime exclaims, leaning in to peer at the arrow pinning the bug against the wall.

“I missed,” Tommy corrects, lowering the bow. “I was aiming for its wings.” He’d wanted to trap the bug, but instead he’d killed it. He’s getting rusty.

“I’d say you got it,” Jester huffs, hand brushing hair from his ear and subtly rubbing it as if to assure himself it’s still in one piece.

“It wasn’t where I was aiming,” Tommy shrugs.

“You are very good at that Tommy Innit from the Ruins.”

“Ruins?” Tommy questions after a moment of silence.

“Yes,” Slime nods. “I’ve finally figured out where you’re from, Tommy Innit from the Ruins.”

“Ruins?” Jester hums, thinking to himself.

It does make sense, at least somewhat. L’Manburg is in ruins, his L’Manburg is, and no matter how long he may be away and how long it lays in pieces he will always see L’Manburg as his home. Tommy shrugs and ignores the nuisance in his living room to walk around the island into the kitchen. He props the bow against the back of it before digging through his cabinets until he finds one of the two cups he owns. Both are chipped and cracked and probably, definitely, shouldn’t be used anymore, but he didn’t care or use them enough to justify getting new ones.

“You know,” Jester starts and Tommy rolls his eyes, still facing away from the living room. “It’s customary to offer guests refreshments.”

Tommy snorts, “I can assure you, I don’t have anything you’d want.” Tommy drops the cups on the counter and grabs the gallon jug of water he keeps off to the side, pouring it into the cups. He took one look at the rusty colored water coming from the kitchen tap and decided he was better off not drinking it. It’s a good thing he doesn’t drink water much anyway. It’s not like he needs to like the people in this world apparently do. “Nothing your fancy ass taste buds are used to rick prick.” He hears shuffling and steps as Jester walks over and Tommy slides the worse off cup in Jester’s direction. If he wants it he can have it.

He glares at the cup in obvious disgust. “I am not touching that.”

“I warned you,” Tommy shrugs and takes a sip from his own cup. Was it disgusting? Yes. Is he going to drink it anyway so he could see the hilarious disgusted, incredulous look Jester was sending him. Yes, yes he is. “If you want something to eat my fridge is fully stocked.” Tommy chuckles as he nudges open the door of his fridge revealing shelves filled back to front with bowls and bowls of whipped cream and doors packed from edge to edge with cartons of heavy whipping cream.

“Is that all whipped cream?” Jester asks incredulously and if he’s not mistaken just a little bit or horror.

“Yes, yes it is,” Tommy answers sweetly. “Is that a problem?”

“You have nothing else?”

“Nope!” Tommy responds, popping the ‘p’. “Unless sugar counts. I need it to make the whipped cream.” Vanilla extract too, but he’s not letting Jester have any of his vanilla, not on his life. That’s *his* vanilla.

Jester mutters something he can't hear before clapping his hands together. "Well, it seems our business is done here."

"It appears so."

"I will see you soon, I presume?"

"Most likely," Tommy sighs. Quackity's always been one persistent bastard and this world is no different, even more so than before dare he say it. Jester doesn't have to say anything before Slime is melting into the floor, disappearing from view, and Jester leaves without another look behind him. Tommy sighs, grabbing the cups left behind and washes them out before tossing them back into the cupboard.

He sighs again as he throws himself onto his couch, a bowl of whipped cream in his hands, and pulls up a movie on the tv. Up plays softly in the background as he eats his whipped cream and his eyes drift from Russel knocking on Carl's door to see his statue of Drista standing at the edge of the tv on the cabinet.

"Maybe I should carve the others," he mutters looking at the Drista statue standing all alone. He nods to himself. "Yeah, I'll do that."

The movie fades away as he thinks about his family. He hopes that they're all alright and that Drista, Kristen, and XD are recovering well. He summons his comm, sitting up and setting the now empty bowl on the table, and pulls up Drista's contact.

[TommyInnit] : How are you doing?

It takes a bit for a response to come through and while he waits he watches as Carl's house takes off, hundreds of balloons lifting it into the sky. The comm in his hand buzzes and he looks to see Drista's response.

[Drista] : I'm alright.

[Drista] : I should be able to come visit soon. A month or two, give or take a few weeks.

[TommyInnit] : That's great!

[Drista] : Yeah and keep an eye out for Shroud. Mumza said she's going to start leading him over soon.

[TommyInnit] : Really? That's amazing!

[TommyInnit] : I've really missed him

Tommy debates for a moment before pushing aside his doubts and asking the question he's been too afraid to ask despite how much he's wanted to.

[TommyInnit] : How is he? He's being taken care of?

Drista doesn't respond for a while, three dots blinking in the corner cycling over and over as he waits with laser focus on them. He's been wanting to ask about Shroud since the moment he landed, but he was too afraid. What right does he have to ask about the child he abandoned the same way Phil did to him? The way he swore he never would? He didn't want to leave Shroud behind, but he couldn't have come with him and if he hadn't left Shroud would have to spend his life on the run constantly at threat. Either that or he leaves him with someone else which he thinks would be even worse. At least if he's in a different world he can feel a little less guilty about not being able to take care of him, but in the end it was his decision to leave and that means that guilt will always be there, eating him up inside.

[Drista] : He is well. Eret is taking good care of him.

Tommy lets out a breath of relief and sinks into the couch. He's alright, his son is alright. He doesn't entertain the thought that Shroud could forgive him for leaving, but at least he's safe and hopefully happy and that's all Tommy could hope for.

[Drista] : He misses you.

His heart sinks and all his mind can think of is how he left his son behind without a word in explanation or apology, just nothing but a bloody corpse he prays he didn't have to see. Tears pool in his eyes, but he refuses to let them fall as he starts typing.

[TommyInnit] : I miss him too.

Tommy turns off his comm and sends it away. He stares up at the ceiling as the movie continues in the background, his mind far away from what's happening on the screen. His body was heavy with guilt and sadness and he couldn't help but dwell on it. He didn't have a choice to leave, not really, but that doesn't stop him from missing him. No that's not right, he did have a choice, but what life would Shroud have lived if he'd stayed? To always be on the run with danger at their heels? To watch him die and come back over and over again while he lives a life filled with instability and loneliness? No, that's not what he wants for him, he wants him to live a long, calm life without worries and that's not something that would be possible with him around. This was the best option, for everyone.

Tommy lays down on his couch and closes his eyes, letting the world fall away around him and wishes he grief could do the same as he rests.

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"Tommy, there's a package here for you."

"Really?" Tommy questions, head popping up from his work. When he sees the box he beams. "My fabric!" He puts the scarf he was embroidering off to the side and rushes over to Clementine.

Clementine chuckles as she hands the box over to the excited teen. "Is that for the suit you're making?"

"Yup!" Tommy cheers, unpacking the box onto the counter.

“I’ll leave you to it then,” she hums with a smile and walks to the front of the store. Tommy finishes taking everything out of the box and looks at the array of fabric before him. He ended up getting a couple options: a deep burgundy velvet, a royal blue cashmere, and navy cashmere. He was tempted to get silk, but he decided cashmere was better for the navy color. He ran his fingers over each fabric, trying to get a feel for it, and eventually put aside the burgundy. It was nice, but it didn’t *fit*.

He looks between the royal blue and the navy but he just didn’t see either of them working for Quackity. He sighs loudly, disappointment oozing from his being. “Why don’t they work?” He idly taps his finger against his chin as he stares at the fabric, racking his brain for a fix to the problem. Suddenly he’s hit with a realization and his eyes light up. “That’s it! I’ve been thinking about this all wrong!”

Tommy grabs the navy fabric and rushes it over to the worktable, laying it out and grabbing the pattern he’d made. He’d been going about this with the idea of making a suit for the Quackity he knew on the Smp when he should have been doing is making a suit that fits this Quackity *specifically*. Not Jester, not Morph, *Quackity*. He’s been trying to make a suit that fits all of them at once and that’s why it didn’t fit at all. *Quackity* ordered the suit and that’s who he has to make it for.

With his plan realized, he finally gets to work.

## Chapter End Notes

Hey everyone! Sorry it's been a while. My internet stopped working for almost a week then I got a cold and couldn't work on it for a while.

Coming, next chapter: Tommy meets someone new (familiar)! I wonder who it will be?  
:)



# Chapter Twenty-Seven

## Chapter Summary

Tommy has a bad day.

## Chapter Notes

Tw's:

Panic attack, mental breakdown, self harm, self deprecation, and blood.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy leaves work as the sun sets, Clementine deciding to close early for the day with an exhausted look in her eyes. Tommy was happy to help her up the stairs and close up for her while she rested. She's been doing worse lately and Tommy hopes she starts to feel better again soon

He doesn't head straight home like usual instead detouring towards where he vaguely remembered a tool shop being. It takes some wandering before he finds it but it was nice out so he doesn't mind it. A soft bell chimes as he walks in and he gives the store clerk a nod before heading into the aisles. The place was small, but he was sure he'd find what he needed. He learned how to carve using a dagger, but he'd be hard pressed to find one of those in a shop like this so he settled on the most similar looking knife he could.

He idly browses the selection of tools seeing if there was anything else he could use as his mind retreats back to when he first learned. He remembers the crackle of the firewood and the wind rushing through the trees as he watched, laser focused, as Techno's hands deftly carved a piece of wood. Tommy's seven year old self fascinated as the block of wood slowly became a figurine of a bird, a crane. He loved that statue, gifted to him later that night, and remembers sobbing when it was lost to him, blown up by one of the many explosions set by Dream in his exile.

It took a while to get Techno to teach him, not succeeding until Pogtopia when they were all in need of a distraction, and he took to it like a fish to water. He may not have ever been able to get as good as Techno was but they were usually good enough to make a nice gift. He knows Ranboo and Tubbo at least liked the ones he made them. Puffy too, she kept the small sheep in her therapy office and he saw it whenever he visited. He had quite a few carvings by the end of Pogtopia, all in different states of completion and quality, and last he remembers those first few were still lined up on his little shelf in his room in the fissure.

Tommy's eyes land on a small section of paint and he walks over, carefully picking out the colors he needs for his statues. After he's sure he's picked the ones that would work best he starts making his way to the front counter. As he's walking he passes by a shelf of small chains and ropes and stops. The small but sturdy silver chain on the end was perfect to string through his compass to wear as a necklace! He grabs the chain, careful to not drop anything in his hands, and adds it to his pile of things. With the chain in hand he completes his walk to the counter and sets everything down. Now knowing how this all works the interaction goes off without a hitch and he's on his way in no time at all, a bag of new supplies hanging from his fingers. His next stop is a wood store a little farther down the way and he spends a while trying to find the perfect one to use for his statues, nothing too brittle it cracks or breaks but not so soft or weak that it doesn't last.

Finally finding a good option he purchases the wood he needs and lazily starts walking along the sidewalk, taking in the surrounding shops, shying away from anyone who steps too close. As he walks he passes by the cafe, heading back in the direction of his apartment, when his eyes land on a tech shop he remembered passing a while back. He shrugs before walking in its direction, he might as well check it out. Maybe one of the workers will have some tips on how to fix the scratches from when he dropped it on the roof.

Tommy arrives at the storefront and walks over to the door, reading the sign saying 'second hand tech and repair shop' once it swims into view. He opens the door, a couple notes alerting the shop to his arrival in a musical lilt, and steps into the shop. He wasn't sure what tech shops were supposed to look like but for some reason this one looked messy almost. It wasn't that there was stuff in his way or piled along the floor, it was just that the tables and shelves were cluttered with second hand electronics and the lights were dim, one in the corner flickering faintly.

"Not again," a voice says before there's a few thumping noises as a fist hits a wall. The flickering light snaps back on and stays that way. "Sorry about that," the voice says, moving closer. "That light's got a mind of its own." The voice enters the front area from somewhere in the shelves and Tommy freezes, eyes staring into kindhearted green eyes, familiar but not identical without the usual black sclera. "Now, what can I do for you?" Sam asks, now standing behind the counter as he wipes his grease stained hands on an equally stained towel.

Tommy wills his hands not to shake as he stares into the eyes of someone he once thought of as a father, someone he saw as a protector, someone who was now nothing more than the murderer of his best friend. He swallows past the lump in his throat and forces himself to speak. "My computer," he manages to say, voice not gaining the volume he was aiming for. He clears his throat. "I dropped it, got all scratched up." Tommy's chest feels tight as Sam continues to act calm, not at all bothered by the interaction. Meanwhile Tommy's mind has become nothing but a constant stream of 'it's not him', over and over to remind himself of the truth. They may look alike, but *that's not him*.

"Can I take a look at it?" Sam asks and Tommy jerks a nod, barely remembers to pretend to be grabbing his laptop from one of his bags before summoning it from his inventory and handing it over, placing it on the counter to keep the distance between him and the man he last saw driving a sword through his best friend's chest at a maximum. "You weren't kidding," Sam chuckles, grabbing the computer and looking it over. "Any problems with it?"

“No,” Tommy says, taking a deep breath and slowly letting it out as Sam focuses on the computer in his hands.

Sam nods, “The scratches are an easy fix. That all you want me to do?” Tommy nods, not trusting himself to speak. “Alright then,” he says. “I can get this fixed pretty quick so I can do it now if you’d like.” Tommy nods again. “Great, feel free to look around while you wait.” Sam flashes him a smile before taking his computer into the back room. The second Sam’s out of view Tommy lets himself fall to his knees, hand gripping his shirt over his heart as if it could make it slow down, his heartbeat reverberating through his ears, deafening. His hands shake and his chest *aches*, every breath tearing through his lungs like paper through a shredder. Flashes of Ranboo’s still body lying in the water at the foot of the prison, his skin melting away as his blood stained the surrounding water, of Sam standing over his body without a shred of regret or mercy in his eyes, his sword at his side slowly dripping blood that he didn’t care to wipe, of Dream running without a care toward the death that was in all ways but one his fault, but when has Dream ever cared about the blood on his hands?

Tommy manages to peel himself off the floor, retreating into the bowels of the store to hide away should Sam come back, more stumbling than anything else. He can’t stand the thought of Sam trying to comfort him as he had all those times before back when Sam Nook was helping him build the hotel and he found himself trusting the creeper hybrid. He thinks if he were to try he’d only start crying. He’s surprised he hasn’t already.

Tommy pulls his focus to the trinkets lining the shelves around him, forcing himself to get out of his head and calm down. He needs to calm the fuck down before Sam gets back. “It’s okay,” he whispers to himself, voice wavering as he forces steady breaths through the pain in his chest. “It’s not him. It’s not him,” he repeats a few times, quietly pulling himself together in the back of the shop. Eventually his chest didn’t hurt so much and his hands trembled more than they shook and he was sure he could handle the rest of the interaction.

Tommy stood, bracing himself on a nearby shelf in aid as he brought himself to his still weak legs. Tommy’s eyes scan over the shelves and only spots more stuff he doesn’t recognize. Why must this world have so many new and confusing things? He couldn’t figure out what any of the stuff was if he tried.

Tommy starts making his way back to the front and sees Sam tinkering around with something, his laptop lying on the counter without a scratch in sight. Even the small dent in the corner had been flattened out and made to look as close to new as it could get. Which was admittedly pretty close.

“There you are,” Sam says, smiling that horribly kind smile of his. “See anything interesting?”

Tommy swallows, “Nothing I understand.”

Sam chuckles, “That’s too bad.” He puts aside whatever it was he was working on and gestures to Tommy’s laptop. “You’re computer’s all good to go.”

“Thanks,” Tommy nods and grabs some primes from his ‘pocket’. Sam tells him the price and Tommy quickly counts out the money before setting it on the counter, pushing it ever so

slightly towards the other so he doesn't seem rude.

"Thank you," Sam says, grabbing the primes and setting them in his cash register. "Have a great day and come again soon," Sam happily says in farewell, smiling in that way he always does with a grease stain still stuck on his cheek. The very same smile that used to make Tommy feel safe and happy, the smile he used to trust, but this time all Tommy felt was grief. Sam didn't wear that smile when Dream escaped and he killed Ranboo, he hadn't smiled like that since the prison was still relatively new, at least from Tommy's perspective, and especially hasn't since he broke in to kill Dream. Even then the smile stopped feeling safe after he was killed, after Sam left him to die by Dream's hand for the third, and what should have been, final time.

Tommy nods one last time, more a sharp dip of his head as his eyes focus on anything but the only other person in the shop, and left, head ducked as he clutched his laptop to his chest. He doesn't look up on his way home, not even when his shoulder slams into someone else's and erupts in the fiery pain he can never seem to get used to. He mumbles out a quick, quiet apology before continuing on his way, not noticing the curious look sent his way nor the malice poorly concealed in the person's gaze.

The second the door is locked Tommy lets his body fall against the wall beside it, sliding down until he's sitting on the floor, computer still held tight in his arms. He forces deep, even breaths, ignoring the tremble in his arms and the quiver in his chest.

"It's not him," he whispers. Ranboo's death plays through his mind. "It's not him," he repeats, harsher. A raw potato crashes down onto his face. "It's not him." A trident it held across his chest, pulling him back as across a sea of lava his brother is killed all over again. "It's not him." His eyes are closed and yet a gas mask covering stern, unforgiving eyes stares back at him, gaze burning into his soul.

Tommy chokes on a sob, hands knotting in his hair, face twisting into anger. "That wasn't him!" he yells into the empty apartment before breaking down into sobs. "I hate this," he mutters through sobs. "Why? Why am I so weak?" Why can't he just hold himself together? Why does it seem like all he ever does is cry? He's supposed to be happy. He has a second chance, he got to start over, and yet he's still stuck in the fucking past. Why can't he just be happy? Why can't he just leave it all behind?

Tommy's hand falls from his scalp to his chest, fingers twisting in the fabric, nails digging into the flesh through the garment. Distantly he's aware that his laptop had fallen again, along with his other bags, the computer sitting innocently not even a foot in front of him, not a scratch in sight, but he can't focus on anything other than the pain in his chest and the tears falling freely down his face.

It takes him longer than he'd like to calm down, he'd rather not have broken down in the first place, somehow managing to drag himself to the bathroom. He stares into the mirror, room dimly lit and casting his face in a partial shadow, his eyes meeting dull blue, almost gray, with a dark bruise of purple beneath it. Sleep may not be required, but it's definitely advised, especially if he doesn't want to deal with eye bags. He honestly couldn't bring himself to care. His blonde hair was stringy and grimy, a shock of white hair right in the front where he could always see it. That damned white streak.

Why can't he just move on? Why must he live with constant fucking reminders of what happened? Why does he have to remember just how *weak* he is every time he looks in the fucking mirror. He hates it, he hates his fucking hair and he hates his scars and most of all he *hates* Dream, the fucker that started all this shit. If he could go back in time to when they locked Dream in prison Tommy would take his last life before he ever got there. Instead, here he is, staring at his scar riddled body in the mirror, barely an inch of visible skin free from the blemishes, and a piece of bone white hair on the brink of falling into his eyes.

Tommy scowls, fists curling into balls, as he glares at his reflection. He doesn't know when he started to move, when his fist flew towards the mirror, but the next thing he knew his hand was throbbing and there was a crack in the glass, blood splatter decorating the surface. Tommy looks down at his hand, at the bloody knuckles he'd just given himself, and watches as the wounds seal up and his skin is as clear as it was before and for some reason watching his hand heal only made him angrier.

It's not fair, why is it that his hand can heal so easily, but he still has to live with the reminders of everything that's happened to him? Why can his hand go back to as it was when looking at his hair will always remind him of what should have been his final death? Why can his hand go back to normal while his back never seemed to fully heal from the loss of his wings? Why is it his hand can heal while he's forever stuck with a faint ringing in his ear and the sound of explosions dancing through his head every time he lays down to go to sleep? It's not fair, why can't he just feel better! Why won't he just forget about everything and move the fuck on! Why can't he make it all go away!

Tommy screams in frustration and anger as he hits the mirror again, cracks spider webbing through the glass. Again and again he swings, the cracks getting bigger and pieces falling off, until when he looks at his fist it no longer heals. His chest heaves as he stares at his knuckles, at the blood that slowly drips down the side of his hand. He watches as it makes its way down the side of his fist and to the bottom where it slowly falls, practically in slow motion, to the floor.

His chest bubbles and his mouth spits into a too wide grin and instead of the anger that felt all consuming just a few seconds before Tommy started to laugh. His hands shook as he brought them to his chest, laughter spilling from his lips as he sank to his knees. Tears dripped from his eyes and down to his chin as his laughter became pained, his hands tangling in his hair. His laughter descends into sobs and his hand twinges in pain as his grip tightens.

He knows there's blood in his hair now, he knows there's probably glass in his hand and that the bleeding hasn't stopped, but he can't bring himself to care. Instead he lets out everything he's been holding back. He sobs and sobs until his chest hurts and his eyes sting and there isn't a single tear left in his body. Even then he doesn't move, curled up in the corner of his bathroom, floor covered in shards of glass, staring blankly at the destruction.

"Fuck," he breathes, voice hoarse, as he lets his head fall against the wall behind him. His hand throbs dully and he doesn't need to look to know there's more than one piece of glass wedged there. "What's wrong with me?" he mutters, voice wavering. He swallows back the tears that teeter at the edge and forces himself to stand up, wincing when his shaking hand runs through his hair, catching on the clots of dried blood.

He manages to pull out each shard of glass, mostly small ones that didn't go too deep, thankfully, and bandages his hand. He doesn't want it to heal yet, he'll eat later. His bar is high enough he won't starve for a while so he doesn't see the point in bothering with it. With his hand taken care of he cleans up, both himself and the bathroom, and makes his way into the living room. He lays on the couch for a long while before deciding he might as well be somewhat useful and get started on the statues.

Grabbing his new supplies from the door he returns to his seat and grabs the knife and starts to carve.

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"Tommy? What happened dear?" Clementine asks as he enters the shop, hand taking his bandaged one in hers. Fuck, he forgot to eat something to heal it.

"Tripped," he answers. No way in hell he's about to tell her the truth. He's lucky to she hasn't abandoned him as it is, he's not going to risk losing her by letting her know just how fucked up he is.

"Be careful, alright?" she says. "I don't want you hurting it more. Make sure you take it easy today, alright?"

"I will," he promises. She nods and gives his hand a soft pat before shuffling away. He takes that moment to grab the scones from his inventory, devouring both of them as quickly as possible. They brought up his hunger bar enough to heal his hand, but it very quickly dipped back down to where he's left feeling hungry again. He unwraps and disposes of the bandages, flexing his hand a few times. There were little pale marks on his hands, nothing he's not used to, he just has to hope the new scars aren't too noticeable. He already had quite a few on his hand after all and they, for the most part, blend in with his previous ones if only looking a bit fresher.

Tommy exits the bathroom and looks up to see something floating off the top shelf, wreathed in pale lavender light. It shakes a little as it moves through the air, Tommy confusedly trailing it, until it lands on a table. Right in front of Clementine.

"Are you feeling better now dear?" she asks and starts laying out the roll of fabric that had just landed in front of her.

"Yeah," he responds, still looking at the roll of fabric. How the fuck did he not realize Clementine could do that? At least now he knows how she gets stuff on the top shelf. "That's cool as fuck," he decides to say.

"Thank you dear," she responds with a chuckle, cutting a large piece off the roll. "It's very useful for an old lady like me who can't climb a ladder." She chuckles again.

"Seems like it," Tommy agrees with a smile. "How come I haven't seen you use it before?" He settles into a nearby chair with a shirt he'd been meaning to start mending, the sleeve attached by a thread. He's not going to question how that happened.

“I haven’t needed to use it so often recently,” she says. “I usually give you the orders that need stuff off the top shelves.”

“Huh,” he says, looking up and to the side for a second as he mentally looks through the projects he’s done. He does, in fact, get a lot of his materials from the top shelf. “You’re right.” He shrugs and returns to the shirt in his hand. They work in companionable silence for a long while until Clementine reminds him to go to lunch.

He smiles and waves on his way out and heads over to the cafe, the bell ringing as he enters.

“Hey Niki,” he greets.

“Hey Tommy,” she responds. The bags under her eyes have gotten darker since the last time he saw her and he can’t help but worry. They’d been getting worse and worse over the past couple of weeks. “What’ll it be today?”

“How about a recommendation?” he asks after not seeing anything particularly eye-catching in the case.

“How about a snickerdoodle?” she offers.

“A snicker doodle?” he asks, emphasizing the words of the treat. “Are you messing with me? The fuck kinda name is that? Snicker doddle?”

She laughs, “I’m not messing with you and I’m not sure why they’re called snickerdoodles, I’m not the one who named them.”

“Well, I guess I’ll just have to see what this ‘snicker doodle’ is all about then.”

“Coming right up,” she answers and quickly sets about getting his order ready. A few minutes later Niki walks over with his usual hot chocolate and a cookie.

“Thanks,” he says and takes the food, opting to take a bite from the cookie right away. “Not bad,” he admits.

“I’m glad you like it,” she responds.

“How’ve you been, Niki?” he asks, leaning against the counter as he takes a sip from his hot chocolate.

“Alright,” she responds, but he’s not sure she’s telling the truth, not completely at least.

“You sure?” he asks and gestures to her eyes. “You’re starting to look like me with dark circles like those under your eyes.”

She chuckles, “I don’t know, I think you’ve got me beat.”

“Oh I most definitely do,” he responds. “No one sleeps as little as I do.” They chuckle a bit and Tommy stuffs the rest of the cookie in his mouth, swallowing before continuing.

“Seriously, are you doing alright though?”

“Yes, I’m fine Tommy,” she assures him. “There’s a lot going on, but I’m alright. Promise.”

“Good,” he responds with a sure nod. His eyes dart to his hunger bar quickly and finds it’s barely any fuller than it was before. Looks like snickerdoodles aren’t too filling. “Got any pies?”

“Whole ones?” she asks and he nods. “No, but I’ve got three quarters of a cherry?”

“Can I have it?”

“Sure,” she chuckles. “Whipped cream?”

“Of course,” he responds and she smiles before grabbing his pie and whipped cream. Tommy digs out the primes for his food and drink and puts it on the table just as she returns with the pie, whipped cream piled on top. “Why thank you.” He doesn’t hesitate to start eating. Tommy drags over a nearby chair, a chair that only started appearing a few days after he started visiting and has sat there ever since, and sits next to the counter so he can talk with Niki while he eats, chair pointed so he can still see the door as he talks of course. He may be getting rusty, but he doubts he could ever forget how important it is to always be vigilant.

“Sticking by me today?”

“Mhm,” Tommy hums, mouth stuffed with pie. He and Niki talk the entire hour, minus when his mouth is too full to eat, he does have *some* manners after all, and only when it’s time to leave does he realize Wilbur never showed up. “What, Wilbur sleep in or something?”

“Something like that,” Niki says, her eyes falling to her phone for a second before refocusing on him, smiling just a little forced to be real.

Tommy shrugs, “Alright, I’ll be heading out then. Tell him to set an alarm next time, yeah?”

“Will do,” she responds and Tommy waves one last time before heading back to work.

## Chapter End Notes

Hope you all had a great holiday season and a happy new year! :)



# Chapter Twenty-Eight

## Chapter Summary

Wilbur asks for a day off, Sam gets some new information, and Schlatt decides to cause some trouble.

## Chapter Notes

Tw's:  
referenced human experimentation

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wilbur yawns as he makes his way into the main room of the SBI floor, body moving on muscle memory to get to the kitchen.

“Coffee,” he whispers, stumbling through the kitchen to the coffee machine. “Beautiful, precious coffee.” He holds his mug in both hands, deeply breathing in the amazing smell, letting out a sigh. “Sweet, sweet coffee,” he mutters before taking a sip.

“Are we interrupting something?” Wilbur nearly chokes and his eyes snap open to see Phil trying not to laugh in the doorway with Techno sitting at the table sipping a cup of tea with a piece of buttered toast on the plate before him.

“Phil no, why’d you stop him? My blackmail material,” Techno huffs.

Wilbur clears his throat and attempts to regain some semblance of dignity, standing up straight. “Well, I didn’t see you there.”

“Obviously,” Phil snorts and Wilbur glares at him.

“Seriously,” Techno says. “You are way too attached to that coffee.”

“I’m *tired*,” Wilbur responds. “I *need* it.”

“Phil, how do you go about breaking a coffee addiction?” Techno asks, calmly taking a sip of his tea.

“I’m not addicted,” Wilbur mutters before taking a long sip of his beverage.

“I don’t know mate,” Phil laughs. “I’m pretty sure you are.”

“Phil,” Wilbur whines. “Not you too.”

“Sorry mate,” Phil shrugs, not actually sorry. “But we did have to limit how much you can have in a day.”

“Wow,” Wilbur says. “So this is what my family thinks of me. This is it, this is my villain arc. I hope you’re happy.”

Phil bursts out laughing, “Dramatic little shit.” Techno only rolls his eyes. Wilbur huffs again before taking a long sip of his coffee.

“Whatever,” he mutters. “I’m going to see Puffy.” He pushes off the counter and starts towards the door.

“What for?” Phil asks, shoving a plate of toast he hadn’t even seen the man making into his hands.

“Thanks,” he says, taking a quick bite. “I’m going to take off L’Manburg Independence Day for the three of us. Figured we could use it.”

“That sounds great mate,” Phil smiles. “You already invited Tommy right?”

“Yeah, he said he’d think about it.”

“I hope he decides to come,” Phil says. “I’d love to meet him.”

“Honestly, I’m surprised you haven’t yet,” Wilbur responds. “And yeah, I hope so too.” He can already tell Phil’s immediately going to go into ‘dad mode’ the second he sees Tommy. Hopefully he doesn’t get too startled, Phil can be intense when he’s like that and he’d rather not scare Tommy off. Again.

“I’d like to see him again too,” Techno agrees, nodding into his tea.

“I’ll ask him again,” Wilbur says. “Next time I see him.”

“You don’t have his number?” Phil asks.

“No.”

“Haven’t you known him for a, like, month now? L.”

“I wouldn’t be surprised if he didn’t even have a phone.”

“I find that hard to believe,” Phil snorts.

“No really,” Wilbur insists. “You haven’t seen the way he looks at technology sometimes. Niki told me he once attacked a security camera because it was ‘staring at him’.” Phil hums, contemplating something, before shrugging.

“We’ll have to get him one then,” Phil decides with a nod.

Wilbur snorts out his coffee and he frowns for a second as he watches it hit the floor, his poor coffee. He shakes his head a bit before turning back to Phil. “We can’t just *buy him a phone*.”

“Why not?” Phil asks, head tilting to the side in his usual bird-like manor.

“As much as I would want to there’s no way he’d accept it,” Wilbur says.

“You don’t know that mate,” Phil smiles. “Maybe he’d like it.”

“Yes, yes I do know,” Wilbur retorts. “He’s not the type.”

“You never know,” Phil shrugs.

“He immediately turned me down when I offered him a place to stay,” Wilbur continues. “He won’t even ask Siren for help and it’s literally his *job* to help people.”

“I’m sure I can wear him down,” Phil nods, smiling proudly to himself as he sips his own cup of coffee, pale with heaps of cream and sugar.

“Who knows,” Techno shrugs. “Maybe we’ll finally meet someone who can stand against your ‘dad mode’.”

“Not going to happen,” Phil responds lightheartedly, happily puttering around the kitchen to make his own breakfast.

“As great as this conversation is,” Wilbur interjects, finishing off the last of his coffee. “I should get going if I want to catch Puffy before she starts to get too busy.”

“Good luck mate,” Phil says and waves, continuing his conversation with Techno, as Wilbur walks out getting a small wave from Techno as well.

It’s a quick walk to the elevator and from there to Puffy’s office, especially since there was no one in the elevator when he got there. He knocks on the door and waits for Puffy to call him in before opening it.

“Wilbur!” she exclaims, shuffling aside some papers and resituating in her seat so she isn’t hunched over her desk as she was when he first walked in. “I wasn’t expecting to see you today.”

“Yeah, I had something to ask you. I hope I’m not bothering?”

“Oh, not at all!” She stops messing with her desk and turns her full attention to Wilbur. “Foolish’ll be here in a bit, but I’ve got time. He can always wait a little if he has to.”

“It won’t take long,” Wilbur assures.

“Well, fire away,” she says with a smile, gesturing for him to ask away.

“Phil, Techno and I would like the day off for Independence Day.”

She chuckles, "That doesn't sound much like a question." They both laugh for a moment. "Of course you can have the day off. I was considering making you three take a day off sometime soon anyway. None of you know how to take breaks."

"What can I say, we're very dedicated," Wilbur shrugs.

"More like idiotic," she shoots back blankly and Wilbur can't help but snort. "You're exhausted and those other two aren't much better, you three need this."

"Thanks Puffs," he says, fond and thankful.

She snorts, "Sure. Now shoo, you shouldn't be awake yet anyway. How much sleep did you get last night?"

"More than enough," Wilbur assures. That's a lie, he's dead on his feet. "Besides, I've got plenty of caffeine in my system, no sleeping now."

"I could just send George after you," Puffy retorts. "He can knock you out cold for the rest of the day, caffeine or not."

"Please don't," Wilbur pleads, only half joking. "Every time he knocks me out I'm asleep like three times longer than I was supposed to."

She shrugs, "Get some decent sleep and maybe I won't."

Wilbur lazily puts up both his hands, "Promise."

"Good," she smiles.

"Welp, better get going before you change your mind, see ya!"

"Bye Wilbur."

Wilbur waves as he walks out the door and immediately slams into someone standing right outside the door. "Shit sorry, I- Foolish!"

"Hey Will," Foolish says, smiling. Foolish steps out of the way and Wilbur nods in thanks before walking past him and into the hallway. Foolish steps out of the way and the door closes, turning towards Wilbur so they can chat a bit before he needs to head in for his meeting with Puffy.

"Heard Dream's been let free from the infirmary. How's he doing?"

"He's good," Foolish responds. "Glad to finally be allowed out of bed."

"Good for him," Wilbur nods. "How long do you think it'll take before he's sent right back?"

"Soon I bet," Foolish laughs. "Reckless idiot."

“I swear, if there was an award for being the most stupidly brave hero, he’d win,” Wilbur laughs and slings an arm over Foolish’s shoulder. “So, you got a meeting with Puffy right?”

“Yea, in a few minutes.”

“Got enough time to walk to the vending machines?”

Foolish thinks for a second before shrugging. “Eh, why not? I think I can get away with being a little late.”

“Good because I was going to drag you along anyway,” Wilbur says. Foolish only chuckles as Wilbur starts pulling him along the corridor. “What’s the meeting about?”

“Nothing much, going over some information on the warehouse cases, picking up some stuff for Dream,” he shrugs.

“Warehouse killer, huh?” Wilbur hums, mood falling. Wilbur’s arm falls from Foolish’s shoulder as he starts punching in the numbers for the snack he wants. Only after fighting with it to accept his wrinkled and ripped dollar of course. Something Foolish had no reservation in laughing at much to Wilbur’s dismay.

“Guy’s definitely a tough one,” Foolish sighs. “Right up there with Jester.”

“Yeah, not many can get away with all the shit they have,” Wilbur sighs, grabbing two bags of beef jerky from the machine. He tosses the second to Foolish who happily accepts it and rips it open to start munching on a piece. They begin their walk back to Puffy’s office. “This is where I leave you,” Wilbur says, stopping outside the door. “Don’t overwork yourself, yeah?”

“Only if you do the same,” Foolish counters before giving him a good natured slap on the back.

Wilbur stumbles forward a few steps and huffs while Foolish laughs. “Yeah, yeah, get in there dumbass,” Wilbur says and gives his shoulder a shove. Foolish barely moved from it but he still started walking to the door. He smiles before ducking into the door frame, a brief wave behind him before the door shuts, and Wilbur smiles before walking away.

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“Hello?”

“Yes, how can I help you?” Sam asks, turning towards the woman in front of him. He’d been talking to the secretary for a while when she’d walked up and he easily turned to see what she needed while the secretary was on a call. When he did he wasn’t expecting to recognize the woman as the one who’d had the run in with the warehouse villain just a few nights ago. The woman’s red hair was in a neat ponytail over her left shoulder, as opposed to the frizzled mess it was when he saw her after the initial encounter, and she wore a pale green shirt that was only a few shades lighter than the one she wore then.

“My name is Alex and I gave my statement the other day about the villain sighting.”

Sam's lighthearted demeanor immediately becomes serious and he falls into a more professional attitude, turning his full attention to her. Not that he wasn't paying attention to her before, but he's always subconsciously going through the memories of his clones as they happen and unless he reabsorbed them all right then and there he wouldn't be able to stop it. "Yes, I remember. Is there something wrong?" Had she been targeted? It didn't seem like it and if she were it's likely she wouldn't be here now with the killer's reputation.

"No, nothing like that," she says. "I have some more information I left out last time. I only just remembered this morning and thought it might be important."

"Of course," he says, nodding. "Let's take this somewhere more private, shall we?" Sam leads the woman to a conference room off to the side of the lobby. There were a few scattered around the first floor, but they were mostly used by tour guides and the occasional meeting with the media. Once inside the room he gestures for her to take a seat while he closes the door. He locks the door, a little light up sign outside switching to say 'occupied, do not disturb', and tests to make sure everything works. He knows it will, he made it after all, but it's always good to check. Once he's sure everything is in place and that the door can be opened from the inside at any time but not from the outside he turns to the control panel. He taps a few buttons and the wall of windows showing the lobby darken and engage the room's soundproofing system to ensure they won't be spied on. It's always better to be safe than sorry and it's better not to risk the person they're talking about finding out any of what they have on him. "Would you like something to eat? Drink?"

"No, thank you," she says, readjusting in her seat by the door. Sam nods and sits across the table from her.

"Do I have permission to record this conversation?"

"You do," she assents with a nod.

Sam quickly sets up his phone to record the meeting for review later on. With a nod she swallows before speaking.

"I previously went on record about my run in with Ichor, but there was something I forgot to mention in my initial statement." She takes a deep breath before continuing. "The axe Ichor was carrying was made out of netherite."

Sam's surprise is an immediate thing. Netherite? How did he manage to get his hands on netherite? Let alone enough for an entire axe! The only ways to get netherite are from Pogtopia's ruins and from Skeppy since he's figured out how to make it using his powers. Pogtopia has been practically dug dry for ages now, what little can be found definitely not being enough for an entire axe, and he knows Skeppy wouldn't just give it away and there's no way any has been stolen from his stores. So how did he get it?

He couldn't have forced Skeppy to make it. It was a miracle they'd stumbled into the process of making it in the first place, truly nothing but dumb luck, and they've kept the fact that they can make it a closely guarded secret amongst heroes, not even Schlatt knew how they got it! There was no way anyone would know they had to go through Skeppy to get it so how did this random villain have so much?

He then remembers something else she said.

“Wait a moment, did you say Ichor?”

“Yes, that is his name.”

“I have not heard it before.”

“Ichor?” He nods. “It is what he is known by to most.”

Sam nods, he’ll have to find out more about this. He’s not surprised, it’s common for repeat villains to be given names by the public if they weren’t already known by one.

“There is something else.” Sam gestures for her to continue. “It wasn’t like normal netherite, not like the rest of you heroes have. Not that I’d know really, I’ve never seen the stuff in real life before, but in broadcasts and the like, compared to this netherite those ones seem...dull maybe? No, that’s not the right word. Either way, this netherite was glowing. It was dim, but there was definitely some type of shimmer to it. Purple too. It was quite pretty actually.” She winces, “I mean, if there wasn’t blood all over it of course.”

“Glowing...” Sam mutters. He’s never heard of glowing netherite before, it’s always been a dark gray color, nearly black, not purple. “I will look more into this, thank you for the information.”

She nods and goes to stand but hesitates, sitting back down again. “You don’t think he’ll come after me for this, do you?”

“I don’t think so,” Sam responds. “I doubt he knows and even if he did he didn’t attack you before, did he?”

“No, he didn’t,” she says quietly, looking off to the side as she fidgets with the strap of her bag before nodding. “Thank you, I’ll be on my way now.”

“Of course,” he responds, standing with her. “Be safe.”

“I’ll try,” she answers, hand on the doorknob. “Make sure those heroes do their jobs and put him away soon, yeah? This place is dangerous enough as it is without some new villain wandering around. It’s better he’s gone sooner rather than later.”

“Of course, we’re doing everything in our power to get this taken care of.” She nods, but Sam can tell by the look in her eyes that she doesn’t quite believe him.

“And I can only hope that is enough.” And then she is gone.

Sam turns off the recording before sitting back for a moment, hand running through his hair, organizing the new information in his brain. Once he has enough of a handle on it he picks himself up and grabs his phone. He walks past the secretary and gives her a quick wave before heading up to Puffy’s office.

He knocks on the door, but there is no answer. After a few more seconds of waiting he types out a text to Puffy letting her know he has new information on the warehouse murder cases, or the Ichor cases as it would most likely be called from then on, and to get back to him whenever she can. After he presses send he turns and makes his way back down to the first floor, using the time it takes to walk the stairs to clear his head instead of taking the elevator.

Before Alex had shown up with more information he'd been planning to head back to the shop to forget things and fix up some computers or something for a bit and now that he's got significantly more to think about the idea has only become more appealing. He quickly makes his way to the basement of the building where staff cars are kept. It's a quick trip through the garage to get to his car but as he walked through the vehicles, many of which he built himself, he couldn't help but slow his pace a bit to admire them. He chuckles to himself when he spots the motorcycle Wilbur had all but begged him for a while back, sitting in the back waiting to be used. He's already planning to conveniently be 'on vacation' when Wilbur, inevitably, crashes on it. There are enough safety features built into it that he should be fine when it happens, but he still dreads having to deal with Phil's wrath after the fact. Hopefully if he's 'out on vacation' when it happens he'll have calmed down some by the time he returns.

A few minutes later he's exiting the parking garage and on his way to the small tech shop he'd bought when the owners were ready to move on and live out the rest of their days in the countryside. It was a nice pass time and great for unwinding after a long day at the tower, simple machines that only need quick fixes most of the time are a great way to relax after constant work on important possible difference between life or death devices. He hadn't been able to stop by in a few days which only made his hands itch even more to work on some of the orders he'd set aside for himself to work on, as opposed to one of his clones who ran the store while he was away.

The door opens with a ring of the bell and the Sam Nook he left in charge while he was gone nods before reabsorbing with a hand on his upper arm. All the memories from the clone meld with his, turning from background noise similar to a movie that someone left one in another room, unless he paid attention to it, into memories that he remembers as if he lived them, and his brows furrow, looking back over the past few days again. He runs through them again, this time specifically focusing on the memories of a familiar blonde teen that had entered the shop. It took a moment to place the face but after a second he realized just who it was.

"Theseus Minecraft," he mutters. Or Tommy as Niki and Wilbur tend to call him. He remembers pulling his files for a meeting a while back and he hears Niki and Wilbur bring him up from time to time, but he'd never had the pleasure of meeting him. Well, technically he had, but he doesn't like to count it fully until he's met someone in his main body.

Looking over what happened with his clone again he sighs, hands massaging his temples. The problem with his clones was that they were very heavily order based. He ordered the clone to watch over the shop and complete orders. Unfortunately, customers hadn't been included in that so his clone didn't see the need to interfere with what was obviously a teenager having a panic attack since it didn't directly relate to the shop's business.



It was obvious that was what had happened. His clone had seen Tommy panicking, hiding in the back of the store not realizing the camera's could see him, but didn't interfere or attempt to help. He'd have to find a way to include customer welfare in his orders next time he sets a clone to look after the shop.

The teenager had first started panicking after hearing his voice, something Sam Nook had discovered when doing his nightly watch of the security camera footage, and Tommy had managed to keep it hidden while interacting with him. If Sam Nook had realized something was wrong while they were talking about the computer he may have helped, but that's a big maybe. His clones aren't nearly as perceptive as he is. The big question is why? What about him made the teen so upset? He knows he can be a little scary at times, but he hadn't even seen him before getting scared, only his voice.

He shakes his head and walks deeper into the shop, heading straight for the back room. He can't think about this right now, he's got too much going on in his brain as it is, he doesn't need to add more on top of it. He can think about what happened with the kid later. Right now, he's going to sit down and he's going to reassemble a computer he'd been wanting to attempt fixing for a while. No murder sprees and serial killers, no new information and villain names, and certainly no random teenagers panicking in his shop that he definitely doesn't want to find and help as soon as possible. Nope, that's for future Sam to worry about and until then he can get lost in the circuitry of a computer that's probably too old to still be in use.

Exactly what he wants to do in his free time.

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Schlatt watches on as the people he hired continue to bring in crates of chemicals, stacking them neatly in the warehouse. Those vigilante's may have sunk the ship holding most of his supplies but what they don't know is that he had a second shipment, one hidden amongst more legal purchases so they wouldn't be able to find it. He knew those assholes would try and intervene so he thought ahead. Overall, it's less that he needs so he's having some workers dive down to see if any of the crates are salvageable and he's going to put in orders for more supplies, but until then he'll make do.

"That's the last one, boss," a worker says as the final crate is set in the warehouse.

"Good, now get out of my sight." The worker nods and scurries away, his coworkers following close behind, and Schlatt stares out over his new supplies. It should be enough to get at least some results. He's not stupid enough to think it'll be enough for some giant breakthrough but it's a start and as pissed as he is that he doesn't have the results he wants he knows not to express that anger anymore, at least not at the scientists. All it does is slow down testing and in the more extreme cases need to find replacements. How was he supposed to know the beaker he'd thrown was filled with highly corrosive acid?

With the chemicals back in stock that only leaves one more thing to get. A new test subject. Tubbo would have been ideal, but the brat just had to leave before the tests could begin, took out a perfectly good trainer when he did too. If he'd been able to replicate Tubbo's power, find a way to give his heroes a copy, he'd be unstoppable! Just think of all the power he'd

have with enhanced heroes under his control! If only the brat hadn't escaped, but he has a better target now, one even more powerful, one that would make him *invincible*. He doesn't know what power he has, but it has to be a good one if he's managed to escape the grasp of his heroes thus far. Now the only problem is getting his hands on him.

A smile spreads across Schlatt's face, a toothy thing of pure malice that sends shivers down the spines of the retreating workers. Then Schlatt's face split open and laughter spilled out, horrid fear inducing laughter. He laughed and laughed as he surveyed the room, as plans years in the making fell together in his mind and he could picture himself standing at the top of the world with a golden crown atop his head, the entire world at his feet all thanks to the army of enhanced heroes at his beck and call, every command followed to a t, and all he needs now to make that a reality is one person.

Esempii's newest villain, Ichor.

## Chapter End Notes

I did write a short story about the how netherite was created and once I'm done editing it I'll post it to the other fic in this series. I've got a couple short stories I want to post there, but they're all in various stages of editing for right now.

Have a great day/night!

# Chapter Twenty-Nine

## Chapter Summary

Tommy runs into a problem.

## Chapter Notes

Tw's:

kidnapping, non-consensual drugging (sedative), death, blood/gore, referenced mind control

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy has noticed the people watching him have changed. One, the previously most common of his watchers, has stepped back. They don't appear as often and when they do they don't stick around as long. Five, on the other hand, has started to appear more often and sticks around for longer. Then there's the Murder Boys. He killed the last group that was following him and he hasn't felt any watching him since, but despite that he has a bad feeling, like something is going to go wrong. He spent the majority of his life fighting for some reason or other, his life at near constant risk, so he likes to think he can tell when he's just being paranoid and when something is actually going to go wrong and right now it's more the latter.

The bad feeling prompted him into leaving work early that night. He wouldn't say sunset was imminent when he left the shop, but it was definitely getting close. He started his walk and kept his eye out for anyone hiding in alleys or on rooftops like the first time. He kept his breathing even and his hands hovering over his sword in his hotbar, falling back into the motions of scouting the forests outside Pogtopia or sneaking around through the trees outside L'Manburg during the early days of the war, patrolling to keep his home safe. Only now it wasn't to protect his country.

Then, as he's passing the mouth of an alley he spots a flash of purple and green on a rooftop and almost pulls out his bow, but pauses as he looks at the figure. He recognized the person as Time Keeper, he hadn't seen the vigilante since he tripped on the roof after spotting him all those weeks ago, and he was just standing there, staring. Tommy stares back into the vigilante's swirled goggles, people walking past the alley without sparing either a glance, and after what felt like ages the vigilante inclines his head in Tommy's direction before darting away. Tommy takes a second to ponder the odd interactions he's had with the vigilante thus far before continuing on his way, the feeling of danger still ringing in his mind.

He easily falls back into old habit, his nails tapping lightly against his thumb fingernail, a habit he picked up from endless and uneventful patrols he'd never quite managed to break, and continues his trip home. He doesn't see anyone hiding out as he walks and that absence only seems to make the feeling worse, only managing to double as he crosses the border between Upper and Lower L'Manburg. The tapping of his fingers gets faster and his eyes dart around more frequently, barely pausing on each roof or alleyway before switching to the next. His breathing echoes in his ears and he becomes hyper aware of every sound.

The crowds of people have thinned out and those he did see walked much faster than the casual pace of those in Upper, people know better than to walk around Lower any more than necessary, especially at night. Each step feels too slow and each block is too long. Something is going to happen, he can *feel* it but he just can't figure out where it's coming from.

Then all of a sudden that feeling gets stronger than it's been the entire day before stopping completely. The street is silent and there isn't a single person around, while not unusual to see in the hour before sunset it leaves him feeling uneasy. Not even the rattle of a dumpster cat or paper fluttering in the wind reaches his ear, all he can focus on is finding the threat he *knows* is there.

Then he hears it, the shift of weight on loose ground, gravel scraping against concrete, and the heavy breathing of a person lining up a shot, focusing on their target so intently everything else fades away, a sound he's used to hearing from himself. He whirls toward the sound just in time to see a finger fall to a trigger and he drops.

His face is inches from smacking into the rock of the sidewalk and his shoulder is alight with the feeling of metal whizzing by, just enough room between it and him that it missed. His head snaps up and he can feel the scowl that rises to his face as he looks into the eyes of the shocked woman holding a gun. It was different from any gun he'd seen before, but still similar in many ways. She seemed to take his reaction in stride and immediately took aim once more and fired.

Tommy just manages to dodge the slower than usual projectile and runs forward, aiming to tackle the woman to the ground, but instead he's hit from the side. He goes flying as he's tackled to the ground by a man whose skin felt like metal. He immediately shoves his arm between them and punches his face as hard as he can, but when his hand makes contact he hears a loud snap as his hand breaks. His skin is actually metal, noted.

Tommy continues to struggle, but he can't seem to get any leverage to push the guy off. After the punch the man had pinned his arms under his back so he couldn't summon a weapon without stabbing himself in the process and because the guy is made out of fucking metal kicking would only get him a broken foot. The man shoves him further into the ground when he doesn't stop struggling and he knows if he wasn't currently high on adrenaline his hand would be throbbing at the pressure.

"Would you just fucking shoot him already!" the guy shouts and Tommy grins, feral, as he makes it as difficult as possible for the man to keep him down. "He's stronger than he looks." Tommy's grin only widens and shoves against the hold causing the man to let out a low curse. "Hurry up!" His arms most definitely have bruises where the man is holding him but

it's worth it. His sides too considering he got slammed to the ground by what may as well be an iron golem.

"Calm the fuck down," the woman growls. "I needed to reload." Tommy hears a click and looks away from the metal bitch to see the barrel of the gun pointed at his shoulder. She pressed the trigger and instead of the burning pain of a bullet like he was expecting there was only a faint pain, more like the annoying bite of a silverfish than anything else. Those fuckers may be annoying but they're weak as fuck. He looks at his shoulder to see a small container connected to what looked like a needle. "There, happy?"

"Fucking finally," the man huffs and stands. Tommy immediately flies to his feet only for his head to swim and his feet to stumble. He grabs onto the corner of a nearby building, hands scraping against the rough brick, and just barely manages to keep his legs under him.

"What the fuck," he breathes, pain returning as his adrenaline abruptly drains from his system, scrunching his eyes and opening them wide in effort to keep them open. His chest aches from what is no doubt bruised ribs from the tackle and his limbs feel like jelly and his vision is blurry and he could only think of one other thing that made him feel this way. "Weakness potion," he whispers, words slurred and barely recognizable even to himself. A quick glance up shows the slowly bubbling icon of a weakness potion at the edge of his vision and he curses under his breath.

He fumbles with his inventory and hurriedly summons the bottle of milk from his hotbar, uncaring of the two chatting to the side. His hand almost doesn't make it to his face, but he manages to tip the bottle into his mouth and he downs the liquid. He huffs out a breath as he lets the bottle fall to the ground, his limbs too weak to put it back, but he can steadily feel the effects wearing off. A quick glance shows the potion warning had disappeared from his vision. Just a few more seconds, only a little bit longer and he'd be back to normal. Sure his hand hurt like a bitch but at least the bones were healed, a few bruises and a lower hunger bar the only remains of the broken hand.

"How's he still standing?" the man asks.

"I don't know," the woman responds. "Should I dose him again?" Fuck, that was all he had. If he gets shot again he won't be able to negate its effects!

The man nods, "Do it. Better to be safe than sorry."

"Alright," the woman sighs. "If this kills him you're carrying the body."

He scoffs, "I'd be carrying him either way."

Tommy throws himself to the side before she can aim her gun and starts running. For some reason the milk wasn't as effective as should be and he was still trying to brush off the effects of the potion. He'd rather have waited for it to wear off more, but he needs to run while he still can. He'll figure out why it's not working right later.

"Fuck!" the woman shouts. "Get him!" They both start running after him and with Tommy's shaky balance and ill placed footsteps they catch up to him much too easily. He's tackled,

once again, to the ground, a loud crack ringing through the street, and he groans as the pain of broken bones hits and as bruises undoubtedly form all over his body, both from hitting the ground and that gods damned iron golem ass fuck dive bombing him to the ground like a creeper ambush in a ravine. Tommy grinds his teeth against the pain and attempts to push the guy off, but he doesn't move an inch.

Once again Tommy feels the odd pinching pain and he can feel himself getting weaker and weaker, the fight leaving his body in waves until all he can do is lay there limp, his vision getting darker and darker.

"Hurry up...get back...base..." Tommy hears vaguely, hearing going in and out.

Then everything goes dark.

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Tommy comes to in a warehouse. It's dingy and dark and he's laying on a dirty floor with his arms tied behind his back, his hands pressed against his arms. His throat is scratchy and parched, the aftereffects of a too long nap, and his entire body aches from barely healed bruises and a hunger bar too low to finish healing. Right, he got kidnapped. He holds back a groan of pain, eyes barely opened enough to only just see his surroundings. When he doesn't see or hear anyone nearby, only some muffled talking most likely from another room, he opens his eyes fully.

He winces and does his best to pull himself into a seated position without making too much noise. He's only mildly successful. He surveys the room he's in, only seeing a closed door and a couple of posts scattered around the room. He drags himself over to the nearest one and leans against it, the scurrying of small creatures echo around him but he pays them no mind. He lived in Pogtopia too long for something like that to bother him. Besides, it's not like they're going to hurt him.

First things first, he needs to get his hands free. With how they're positioned he can't summon shit without either stabbing himself or losing his whole arm. He's surprised they knew to restrain his hands this way. It was well known on the Smp as the only way to keep a prisoner without them using tools to escape, but he didn't realize it might be used here too. It does make some sense with the amount of power he's seen people use, a great many of them using a person's hands in some way, usually as a way of directing it. He tries shifting his hands around, hoping to turn them away from his arms at the very least, but the rope's too tight all he ends up doing is give himself rope burn.

"Fuck," he whispers, quiet enough it didn't echo in the small room. He starts feeling around the ground and the pillar for a sharp rock or edge. He feels something sharp scrape against his arms and winces before grinning. Found it! He shifts until the rope is pressed against the sharp edge of the pillar. It was difficult and he had to tilt sideways until he was practically laying on the floor again to actually get the rope with the edge, not to mention he's pretty sure he tore up his arms more than the rope, but after a few minutes the first rope snapped and he had to hold back a cheer of joy. One down, one more to go!

The second the ropes are dealt with Tommy pulls himself to his feet, hissing through his teeth as his muscles pull and his body aches. A quick glance down at his arms confirms that they are indeed just as torn up as the rope if not more so.

The first thing he does is dig through his inventory for some pastries left over from Niki's. He goes through the food quickly and his hunger bar rises bringing the steady increase of his hearts, his injuries lessening with it. He lets out a sigh of relief as the pain that accompanied his breathing disappeared, grimacing at the uncomfortable feeling of his ribs snapping back into place from the second tackle, but thankfully he doesn't have to deal with that anymore. He can tell he's still black and blue, but at least the cuts on his arms had stopped bleeding and were practically healed. He's glad the worst injuries heal first, he'd much rather fight with some surface level bruising and tedious scabs than with broken ribs and a few healed gashes. That would suck.

His injuries, mostly, taken care of Tommy grabs something he's been long awaiting to try in battle. Coffee. Tommy grabs the drink from his inventory and moves it to his hot bar where the bottle of milk used to sit. Preemptively, Tommy decides to equip his 'fighting clothes'. The mask is still something he isn't used to using, but he likes to think he's getting better at fighting with it on.

Ready for a fight Tommy walks up to the door and stops, pressing his ear against the deteriorated wood. He hears muffled talking, it's louder here than it was from the middle of the room, but he can tell it's still a bit away. Carefully he pushes the door open and winces when it creaks, the sound echoing through the hallway. He freezes and listens closely. The talking continues without pause so Tommy quickly opens the door just enough for him to fit through before slipping through into the hallway. One side is a row of doors leading to a dead end while the other, the one that leads to the talking, has only one door before a dead end, half open with light spilling into the dark, windowless hallway.

Tommy creeps along the hallway, silent, until he reaches the door and waits, listening to the conversation on the other side.

"Are you sure the kid's not awake?" Tommy stiffens.

"I'm sure." That was the woman who shot him.

"How? Didn't you say he shook it off the first time?"

"I'm *sure*," she insists. "I don't know how he shook off the first dose but no one can just walk off a double dose." Tommy grabs his coffee from his inventory and slowly starts drinking, breathing becoming steady and limbs gaining strength as the exhaustion washes away.

"Maybe he's got resistance or something."

"I made those sedatives myself," the woman snarls. "They're not so weak that some puny *resistance* would beat them. *Especially* after a double dose."

"He shook it off the first time," a voice mutters non too quietly and Tommy can sense the woman glaring at whoever spoke. He suppresses a laugh at her expense. Only the need to be

quiet stops him.

“Yeah, he was out. There’s no way he’s waking up anytime soon,” a voice he recognizes as the iron golem bitch says.

“Tell me again why we can’t just kill him?” a different voice pitches in.

“*Because* the last people who tried that ended up dead and I don’t know about you but I’m not risking that,” the woman huffs.

“Yeah, yeah,” the person continues. “From what you told me it wouldn’t be hard. Brat musta got lucky.”

There’s a crash as a door hits the wall and Tommy jumps, almost giving away his position. He just barely saves his coffee from meeting a cruel fate, he’d much rather drink it than let it splatter on the ground thank you very much. “I’m back!” Tommy peeks through the door to see a person entering through the front door, another person bound in rope dragging on the floor behind him. “I got a hostage!”

“And why do you have a hostage?” someone groans.

“Those guys are recruiting right? Since we didn’t kill the kid I thought giving them a second hostage would make sure they still pay us the same. They did say they were looking for good powers to recruit, willing or not,” the man shrugs and throws the tied up, gagged hostage off to the side of the room. The hostage yelps and shimmies away until they’re against the wall as far from their kidnappers as they could get. Tommy starts chugging the rest of his coffee.

“Good idea,” the one who suggested killing him says. The group continues talking but Tommy tunes them out to start planning. There are six people in the other room, including the other hostage, and he needs to somehow get past them to get out the door, unfortunately there weren’t any windows he could just sneak out of. Then there was the other hostage, he couldn’t just leave them here.

Mind made up Tommy throws back the last drops of his coffee before grabbing his new bow from his inventory and crouches, peeking through the door to aim the arrow at the shoulder of the woman who poisoned him, specifically her right arm since that was the one she used to pull the trigger before. He takes a deep breath and the world around him disappears, tunnel vision leaving nothing but him and his target behind. The breath paused in his lungs as everything froze then he released the breath and with it he lifted his fingers from the string. The string snaps forward, tension leaving the bow as he releases his grip, arrow hurtling toward its target. There’s a scream as it hits its mark, the woman gripping her injured shoulder as the room looks at her in shock. Before anyone could turn their attention toward the door he’s hidden behind he slams it open and *runs*.

He barely makes it a quarter of the way across the room before there’s shouting and the general clamber of people rushing to get weapons. Tommy is almost to the other hostage, who’s shying away from him with tear stained cheeks and eyes filled with fear, when he hears a gunshot. The bullet misses, hitting the wall where he’s been standing only moments before, and he whirls around to face his assailants.



“Are you crazy!” one of the men yells, the first one who asked if he was awake, pushing down the barrel of the gun the most recently arrived held. He must have been the one to shoot. “That’s *Ichor*, better just let him take the hostage and leave.”

The man shoves him away, “We need this money or have you forgotten, *Chris*. Whether we die here or when Jester comes to collect and we don’t have the money, either way we’re dead. Might as well try and go down fucking swinging.”

Tommy throws himself to the side and rolls along the ground as the man shoots again. He grins at the successful dodge, filled with strength and speed he’s not quite used to. Gods, he loves coffee. Lasts longer than a strength potion too.

Tommy runs toward the other hostage again, but a shot lands between them and Tommy turns to scowl at the man. Just let him grab them and leave.

“Fuck it,” the third man says and grabs a handful of knives from the table.

“Cass is out,” Iron Golem Fuck says and gestures to the woman holding her arm.

Tommy dodges a knife that comes flying at him with precision and just barely manages to avoid getting clipped in the arm. He continues to dodge projectiles, Golem and the first man whom he shall now call Jeff tended to the woman, and somehow he finds himself by a large collection of crates, a half open one showing off its contents of glass bottles of potions he doesn’t quite recognize.

He brushes his hand against the nearest crate, the large wooden contraption reaching to nearly his shoulder, and releases a breath at the knowledge that his spawn point is set. He’d rather have one nearby and not need it then have one really far away and have to find the place again to help the other hostage. He isn’t even sure where he is, just that it’s not the street he passed out on.

Bullet and Knife, as he will now be calling them, continue attacking and Tommy’s starting to feel tired, he can only dodge high speed projectiles for so long before his body starts to give out. Honestly, he’s surprised he hasn’t gotten hit as is. Not to mention all this running around is wearing down on his hunger bar and if it gets much lower he won’t be able to run anymore. The coffee’s effects can only last so long and once that’s gone he’ll be a sitting duck. He can’t afford to take another hit, his hearts are low as it is.

Tommy jumps to the side as a knife comes flying toward him, he had hoped the guy would run out eventually but after seeing him recall his thrown blades with a wave of his hand Tommy gives up hoping for that. Unfortunately for him dodging the knife put him right in the path of a bullet. At the same time that the bullet hits his shoulder, sending his hearts into a free fall, another knife is thrown and it lodges itself into his chest. He takes in a rattling breath as his hearts continue to drop and before he can let it out the world goes black.

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She doesn’t know how she got into this situation. She was walking home from work when someone had come out of an alley and knocked her out. Next thing she knows she’s tied up

and being dragged down the street to what she now knows is a villain hideout. She thought this is it, this is the end, she was going to be sent off to work for villains for the rest of her life and there's nothing she could do about it, that or be killed, her and the other hostage the villains mentioned, but then one of the villains got shot by an arrow of all things.

Her shock turned to fear as Ichor jumped from behind a door and started running. *Right toward her.* She tried moving away but with her wrists and ankles tied together there was nothing she could do but hope she wouldn't be killed. But he didn't kill her, he was distracted by one of the villains shooting at him and his attention shifted to them. She took the distraction for what it was and started trying to escape, inching her way across the ground toward the door. Her head is swimming and her face is sticky with blood from the wound that knocked her out. She couldn't use her powers if she tried.

A cheer of victory pulls her attention from her escape and she looks up just in time to see a knife embed itself in Ichor's chest. He takes a breath and stumbles before falling forward. She expected him to fall on his face, still and silent as all corpses are, but instead he seemed to glitch. Light radiated from his body, golden sparks flying into the air, and right before he hit the ground he disappeared only to reappear on a nearby crate. The knife and what looked like a bullet clatter to the floor where his body would have been, *should* have been, and the hole in his shoulder was gone, dried blood coating the hole in his shirt, but there was no evidence of there ever being a wound.

Then he looked up and she felt her entire body freeze. She thought she was scared before but not all she felt was mind numbing *terror*. Ichor was different than before, his eyes were alight with fury and there was a sneer on his lips that showed off teeth just a touch too sharp to be completely human. His arm moves out to the side and a second later a *sword*, materializes in his hand, blood dripping from the blade from who knows where. His movements are calm and slow, but the room holds its breath. Just as she was sure her lungs were about to collapse from the effort to keep from breathing and drawing his attention, he jumped.

He shoots forward like a loaded spring and the villains scramble to get out of his way, sensing the change, but one wasn't so lucky. It was the man who attacked her and brought her here. She blinks and suddenly his body is falling to the ground in pieces. She wants nothing more than to turn away, to erase the gore and violence from her mind, but she can't look away. Her eyes follow as he spins, sword disappearing to be replaced with a bow, an arrow notched and ready to fly. He doesn't hesitate to shoot and the arrow hits the man who was throwing knives between the eyes and he falls to the ground, dead.

"Was it because we hit him?" the woman whispers, her hands shaking as she stares at the bloodied corpses of her friends. "Is that what made him so angry? Is that his power? Does getting injured set off a murderous rage?"

"Maybe, he does seem like a better fighter now," the man made of iron responds, arm around the woman to keep her upright.

"But what about his weapons?" the final asks. He too was shaking. "They just appeared."

Ichor doesn't let them finish their debate and runs forward. The man of iron steps forward, intending to block whatever was sent his way, but in a swift movement Ichor's bow is

swapped for an axe. It lands in the man's arm and he screams as the iron of his skin bubbles and melts around the blade. Ichor's teeth show in a feral grin as he rips the axe from the man's arm only to hit him again, blade turning its attention to his shoulder. And then he did it again. And again. Over and over until he was stationary on the ground, surrounded by a puddle of steaming blood and melted iron. Then there were only two villains left standing against the monster that is Ichor.

She snaps out of her trance at the sound of a metal body hitting the floor and starts inching toward the door once again. Her mouth fills with bile, the blood and gore from moments before filling her mind, but she forces it down. She can't draw any attention to herself. She ignores the sounds of death behind her and does whatever she can to move, to *survive*. Tears pour down her face and her limbs protest as the rope rubs her wrists and ankles raw with every inch of ground gained. She pushes it to the back of her mind and *just keeps moving*. She will not die here, she will not let this dirty warehouse be the last place she sees before she dies.

She lets out a sob, her fear bubbling up and out her throat, as she hears the screaming go silent behind her. This is it, he's noticed her now. There's no saving her now. Still she crawls and prays to any god that will listen that she survives this, prays for Lady Death to spare her just this once and allow her to make it out of this warehouse alive.

The woman was the last to be killed. She heard her and Ichor talking briefly before her voice cut out, but she wasn't paying enough attention to know what they were talking about. Steps slowly crunch against the ground getting closer and closer to where she struggles for the door and stop right behind her. She stops, recognizing that she has no way out, and closes her eyes as tight as she can though it does nothing to stop the onslaught of tears that seemed to choke her. She feels a hand against her wrist and something cold and sharp touches her hands. A knife her mind tells her but she pushes the thought away and tries her best to distance herself from the situation, thinking of nothing but her happiest moments.

Instead of the pain of being stabbed or cut she heard the snap of ropes and her arms were suddenly free, hands no longer pressed against her arms to prevent her from using her abilities. Her breathing hitched and she somehow managed to twist herself to see what was happening and when she did she saw Ichor holding a knife, one of the many that had been thrown by one of the villains, against the rope on her ankles, carefully sawing away at it, taking care to keep the sharp blade away from her skin. The rope falls away a few moments later and she can only lay there in shock. Ichor is helping her? But he's a villain! He's killed dozens of people! She just watched him kill even more, so why is he helping her?

"Can you stand?" The voice snaps her out of her mind and she shrinks away. He raises his hands, palms held toward her, and shuffles back, still crouched down. The knife is laying on the floor near her feet and out of his reach but she knows that wouldn't stop him from killing her if he wanted to. "I'm not going to hurt you." She can't bring herself to say a word. "If you can't stand I can help you up," he offers and she has enough presence of mind to frantically shake her head, backing away from him. "Okay, I'll stay over here. Could you tell me your name?"

“Hannah.” It took her a moment to realize she’d spoken and that the scratchy, weak voice was her own. She clears her throat, not even sure why she’s speaking. “Hannah Rose.”

“Well, Hannah, you stay there, alright? I’m going to get you some help.” Hannah can only stare dumbly as one of the worst villains she’s ever heard of stands and walks away. She watches as he steps through the mess of blood and gore to where a phone sat on the edge of the table the villains had all been sitting around when she was brought in. He walks back over and stops a few feet away when she flinches, sitting back down with crossed legs. It was an odd sight, to see someone covered in blood so calmly sitting amongst the carnage of their own crime scene, tapping away on a phone to call for help, muttering curses under his breath as he does.

Hannah jolts when a phone is suddenly thrust in her direction.

“I’ve got no clue how to work this thing,” Ichor says. He shakes the phone a bit and after a moment she hesitantly takes it. “Call whoever you’re supposed to call when you’re injured, I’m not sure who that is. I’ll be off now.”

“Just like that?” She curses herself when he stops in his tracks, turned away and about to walk toward the door and away from her. Why did she have to say anything? She was almost safe! “You’re not- you’re not going to kill me?”

He tilts his head to the side and stares at her and Hannah can’t help but think it made him look like a curious child. Something that creeped her out to no end. He looked the same kind of curious someone looked when they just heard something they couldn’t believe they just did. As if *she* was the one who was acting weird. “Why would I?” he finally says. “You haven’t done anything to me.”

Then he walks away.

She can do nothing but stare as he walks out the door and out of her line of sight. She sits there for a long while before remembering the phone in her hand. Her thoughts still seemed hazy and she could just barely remember someone telling her that was one of the signs of a concussion. That would make sense. The blood on her head seems to agree with her as it drips down into her eyes and she wipes it away, her head aching.

The screen of the phone has smears of blood on it and it was open to the phone app just waiting for her to dial the number to call for help. With shaking hands she enters the numbers everyone knows by heart, everyone but Ichor it seems, and holds it to her ear as she waits for the ringing to stop and someone to pick up.

*“Snowchester police department how can I help you?”*

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Tommy decides to climb up to the roofs to get home. He’s still not too sure where home *is* but at least he can get an idea if he’s above the roof line. The first thing he does is locate the Hero Tower and try to figure out where he is from there. It doesn’t do shit so he ends up putting the tower to his left and starts walking. If he’s lucky he’ll run into someone who isn’t

immediately scared off by the blood to give him directions. Right now the priority is getting out of the area before the police arrive.

There isn't much to do as he walks but let his mind wander so that's what he does. As he thinks his mind latches on to one specific thing. He's only started trying to kill those assholes *after* they killed him. Before they killed him he prioritized escaping intact, but the second his respawn settled in and he was back the only thing he cared about was seeing them dead at his feet. A line Quackity once used to explain his own reasoning runs through his mind and he can't help but see just how well it fits.

*An eye for an eye.*

It makes a lot of sense, he hadn't even realized that was how he was doing things, unconsciously sticking to the rule. The first time he killed in this world was by giving someone the same injury they gave him. It was deeper and did end up killing him while he survived, but in his defense that was an accident. Then every time he's killed after that it was only after he was killed by them first. An eye for an eye indeed.

Something hits the roof of the building he's on and Tommy freezes, staring at the new person. They were familiar, and not just in the fact that he recognized them from the Smp, but from their aura. It took a few seconds to place it but he finally realized that this person was one of his watchers, Five to be exact.

"Ichor," Punz greets, inclining his head ever so slightly in his direction, if he notices the blood he doesn't show it. Tommy returns the greeting, but does not say a word. He's still not sure if he should be getting ready to defend himself or not. "I come with a message." Tommy tilts his head and Punz takes that as a sign to continue. "Jester would like to meet you."

"Jester," Tommy says slowly. Of course Jester wants to meet the guy going around killing people, he should have expected it. Now he's going to have the guy sniffing around for info from both versions of him. This fucking sucks. Why does Quackity have to be so information oriented in this universe? Though to be fair Quackity did have a thing for blackmail on the Smp.

Punz nods. "That is all I have to say." He turns to leave but Tommy takes this as his chance to ask for directions.

"Before you go," Tommy says and Punz stops right before he could jump away, turning back to face him. "Could you point me in the direction of Lower L'Manburg?"

Punz is quiet for a moment. "If you answer a question."

"Depends on the question."

"Why do you kill?" He never thought he'd have a known assassin asking him why he kills people but here he is.

"An eye for an eye, yeah?"

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Tommy sighs and falls back against his couch, finally clean of blood and able to relax for the first time in what feels like ages. After answering the question Punz had nodded and pointed him toward Lower before jumping away. Thankfully he had been going in the right direction but he didn't realize just how far away he was until he'd been walking for over an hour and he still didn't see any sign of his home. It took two and a half hours to get back, apparently he'd been in Snowchester which was a lot bigger than it had been in the Smp, and the entire trip was cautious and anxiety inducing. He kept expecting someone to jump from the shadows and catch him covered in blood, which had dried uncomfortably on the trip back.

He was more than happy to wash it all away and sit on his couch to begin mending his clothes. There was a new tear in the shoulder and the center of his shirt from the bullet and knife, which hurt like a bitch by the way, along with a few other tears from past uses he hadn't gotten around to fixing yet. He was tempted to go to sleep for the night, but he's better off using the time to get stuff done. He's lasted longer without skipping the night, so he might as well stay up. When he finishes fixing up his shirt he moves on to any other clothes that have holes in them and only when the sun starts to rise does he stand and crack his back, sighing in relief at the action.

He gets ready for the day, deciding to wear a sweater he picked up in a shop one day instead of his usual shirts. It was awesome, pale pink with a raccoon on the front holding something gold. Red is the superior color of course, but pink is just as cool. It is just lighter red after all. The sweater was warm and comfortable and with the scarf Clementine gave him on top it was even better. Now if only he had Shroud, everything would be perfect. He used to love sweaters like this and Tommy let himself think over his happy memories with him and Tubbo and Ranboo and Michael as he walked out the door and started towards Clementine's.

## Chapter End Notes

A year! I missed the official year anniversary, but I still want to make note of it. I can't believe it's actually been a year since I started posting this! Thank you all so much for your support! I promise I read all of your comments even if I'm not good at replying, sorry!

Fun fact:

I started writing the draft for STH in November 2022 and after scrapping the idea and restarting in July we now have this story! The original draft (unfinished) was about 30k words long and I still haven't written all the major plot points from there into this story.

Have an amazing day/night/evening!

# **Not an Update! Please Read!**

## Chapter Notes

I'm not dead!

Hey everyone! I know it's been a while, but I wanted to give an update on what's happening with this story. Ultimately, I have decided to discontinue this story. After everything with WS I was pretty much done with the fandom and I can't see myself finishing writing it as much as I would like to, especially with WS being such a big character. That being said, if you have any questions about plot/what would have happened I will be happy answer them in the comments (if I had anything planned). Thank you all for sticking with me to this point. I wish you all well.

## End Notes

Finally! Chapter one is out and chapter two is (hopefully) soon to come. Thanks for reading!

Works inspired by this one

[This is just the song to go ballistic on, You just pulled a pistol on the guy with the missile launcher!](#)  
by [IcarusLeft](#)

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!